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CHARLES ARTHVR WYNNE FINCH

C. W. G. Wynne.

Poelas.

SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION;

OR,

GUARDIANS AND WARDS.

By ANNE BEALE,

AUTHOR OF

'THE BARONET'S FAMILY,' 'THE VALE OF THE TOWEY,' ETC. ETC.

"This small inheritance my father left me
Contenteth me, and is worth a monarchy.
I seek not to wax great by others' waning,
Or gather wealth, I care not with what envy;
Sufficeth, that I have maintains my state,
And sends the poor well pleased from my gate."

Henry VI. Part II.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1855.

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JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, LITTLE QUEEN STREET,

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

TO MY MOTHER,

WHO WILL READ WITH INDULGENCE

AND RECOGNIZE, AS SHE READS, MANY FAMILIAR SCENES,

This Story is Inscribed,

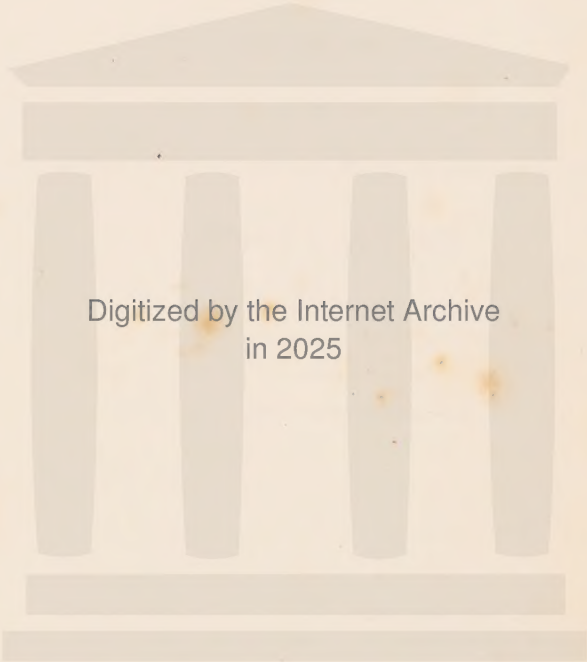
IN TOKEN OF THE LOVE AND GRATITUDE

OF

HER AFFECTIONATE DAUGHTER,

THE AUTHOR.

Llandilo, Carmarthenshire,
September, 1855.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SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION.

CHAPTER I.

"Born in one week, and in one font baptized
On the same festal day, they grew together,
And their first tottering steps were hand in hand,
While the two fathers, in half-earnest sport,
Betrothed them to each other."

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

I MUST begin my story by requesting the Reader to go back with me over some twenty or thirty years already trodden by the foot of Time; and to walk with me to the door of a snug and pretty house, situated about a mile from a small market town in the county of Somerset. The evening is just beginning to close in, as we turn off from the turnpike-road, cross a stile, and pass through a fine field of corn, ready for the sickle. Brightly shine the blue corn-flowers and ruddy poppies amongst the golden ears, and thickly twines the wild clematis in the green hedgerow. This neat gate, at the bottom of the field, leads us into a large orchard, full of all kinds of ripe apples, waiting for

the hungry jaws of the cider-mill; in the midst is a huge round pigeon-house, towards which pigeons are flocking, as to their dormitory. We pass the well perforated pigeon-house, and, emerging from the orchard through another neat gate, circumnavigate a pond full of sleepy ducks and geese, cross the road, and reach an ornamental wicket, flanked by a trim hedge of laurel and privet. We venture through this inviting entrance, and find ourselves in a small court, in front of a low-roofed thatched house, covered with roses and Virginian creeper, into whose latticed windows we long to peep, sure of finding peace and plenty within. Before knocking at the door, we glance round us, and see another ornamental wicket-gate opposite us, dividing more trim hedges of laurel and privet, through which we spy a straight gravel walk, and the heads of sunflowers, hollyhocks, and dahlias, that stand up proudly to look at the setting sun through some dark yew-trees at the bottom of the path. We just peep over the hedge, into the prettiest of gardens; but politeness prevents our being too inquisitive.

From certain rural sounds, of men whistling, cattle lowing, horses tramping, poultry cackling, and human voices answering human voices, we feel convinced that there must be a large farm-yard

somewhere at the back, but we are not permitted to see any of the detail here in the front. We have nothing but the trim hedges, the towering flowers, a glimpse of a green meadow on the left, and on the right, the top of the huge pigeon-house surmounted by some splendid elms, that give welcome to a colony of rooks, cawing themselves to rest.

We knock at the door, and are admitted by a rosy country girl into a passage, where is a stand of geraniums, and thence conducted into a large hall, where we will sit down in a corner, invisible as ghosts by daylight, and look about us.

This hall is a substantial apartment, panelled with black oak. Heavy oaken rafters form the ceiling, and polished oaken planks the floor; over the middle of the latter is a piece of Indian matting. An oaken chimney corner usurps a third of one side of the room, on the hearth of which are placed two bright steel dogs, or andirons. Across these dogs lie big logs of wood, that burn with all their hearts, and as if they took a pleasure in enlivening by their cheerful flames the party assembled near them.

Seated at a table, with a very large work-box open before her, and a basket containing all kinds of stockings by her side, sits a young girl, engaged

in sewing a button on a boy's waistcoat. She may be about sixteen or seventeen years old, and looks very smiling and good-tempered, despite the hard labour she finds it to force a thick needle through a thicker cloth into the thickest and most obdurate of buttons. By her side, minutely examining the contents of her work-box, sits a youth about her own age, of a grave and sedate countenance; and opposite the pair, a curly-headed, pale little boy, busily occupied in covering a piece of paper with hieroglyphical pencil-marks. In a large green chair is a jolly, sunburnt, elderly man, smoking a pipe. He has settled himself in one chimney corner, from whence he looks complacently about him; whilst in the opposite chimney corner sits a tall, middle-aged woman, erect and stately, knitting or knotting, or doing some curious ornamental work, of twenty years ago. On a huge oak settle, that stretches from one side of the chimney half down the room, and partly encircles the whole party with a protecting arm, are three children of various ages. The eldest, a boy of about fifteen, is reading, or seeming to read, but still listening to, and occasionally joining in, the conversation of the rest. As he leans carelessly over the arm of the settle, to let the blaze from the fire fall upon his book, an anxious, thoughtful expression steals over

his face, and makes him look too care-worn for his years.

The other two children, a boy and girl, are twins, and as much alike as twins are usually supposed to be. They are remarkably handsome, and apparently as remarkably idle, for a pile of lesson-books lies unopened by the side of the boy, together with a small unfinished boat; and near the girl is a piece of needlework, with the needle and thread hanging loosely upon it; whilst the pair are occupied in tying together a bunch of ripe corn-ears, of unusually large growth, and occasionally picking out a grain and eating it. When they have finished this business, the boy rises, and having called the attention of the party to the size and splendour of his autumn bouquet, stands upon a chair and fastens it by a string to the mantelpiece, which, unlike our modern ones, is nearer the ceiling by a yard than the floor. This being achieved, he jumps down rather noisily, and stumbles against the quiet possessor of the pipe, who utters a growl; then peeps over the shoulder of the younger child at the table, and giving him a hearty knock on the crown of his head, exclaims, "Well done, Charley! I declare if it isn't as like as it can stare. Look, Captain Burford! Aunty, look! If he hasn't made a capital likeness of Jessie and Nelson!"

"Oh, Peter, how rough you are!" said Charley, yielding up reluctantly the paper his brother had seized upon, and rubbing dolorously the crown of his head.

"By Neptune, that's not so bad!" said Captain Burford, handing the paper over to his opposite neighbour, when he had examined it. "We must make an artist of him, after all. What do you think of your nephew, Miss Burton? Shall we apprentice him to the arts?"

"I do not think my poor brother would have thought of *apprenticing* him to anything," replied Miss Burton, looking at the paper through an eye-glass; "I hope we are not fallen so low as that. And as to an artist, he would as soon have thought of making him a shoemaker."

Charley hung down his head, and Captain Burford laughed.

"And why not a shoemaker?" he asked; "it is a very respectable and useful profession, and it will be 'all the same a hundred years hence,' what he is."

"You always put one down with that very uncomfortable sentence," said Miss Burton with an irritated voice.

"Let me see the likeness," said Jessie, laying aside the waistcoat. "Well, I declare, it is like

you, Nelson; but if this is like me, I am certainly no beauty."

"Oh, but you are a beauty, Jessie," exclaimed Charley; "you have such a nice smile."

"Oh, my dear," said Miss Burton, "it requires something more than a smile to make a beauty," and she drew herself up with a proud consciousness of good looks.

"This really would be like you, Jessie," said Nelson, "if it *had* the smile."

"Just give it to me," said Charley. "Now, Jessie dear, laugh. Look again now, Nelson."

"That is capital!" said Nelson. "Why you are a great genius, Charley, and no mistake."

The little boy smiled and blushed. The picture was again handed round, and finally secured by Nelson, who carefully put it in his pocket-book.

"Why don't you sketch me?" asked the young lady on the settle, speaking for the first time, and putting herself in an attitude.

"You're not good-looking enough, Miss Anna," immediately broke in the bookworm, also speaking for the first time; "is she, Aunt Betsey?"

"Pynsent! you always discourage that dear child," whispered Aunt Betsey. "You know she and Peter are the only ones who inherit the family beauty."

"Very complimentary!" said Pynsent; and with a shrug of his shoulders he resumed his book.

At this crisis the red cheeked servant-maid came in with a letter, which she presented to Aunt Betsey.

"Why do you not bring the letters on a waiter, Dinah?" asked Aunt Betsey in a displeased tone of voice.

"Iz zure, Ma'am," said Dinah, making a hasty exit.

"Excuse me," said Aunt Betsey, glancing round apologetically, as she opened the letter and took up the eye-glass.

"To be sure!" said the Captain impatiently; adding to himself in an under-tone, "Why don't she make haste?"

All eyes were fixed on the letter, which seemed only to cover one side of the sheet, though it took a long time to read.

"So, Ma'am?" at last suggested the Captain interrogatively.

"I thought so," said Aunt Betsey majestically; "but you would insist on my writing. Nothing satisfactory to be obtained from those sort of people."

"I suppose I may see it, as your co-guardian?" said the Captain.

Aunt Betsey passed over the letter, and he read it attentively, but speedily.

"Odds bobs, Madam!" he said, when he had finished, "what would you have? why the good gentleman offers to educate one of the girls."

"Educate, indeed! and for a governess! what would my dear brother—"

"Your dear brother, Ma'am, and my good friend, is, I am sorry to say, no more; and we must consult prudence, and look at things as they are. Co-trustee number three,—I'm poetical, you see,—what do you think of the matter?"

Here the Captain handed the letter to Jessie, who read it in her turn. She looked perplexed at the disputants, but said, "Why, Aunty, it really is very kind. He says not only that he will educate one of the girls, but that if the boys are steady and turn out well, he may lend them a helping hand one of these days. I think we should be very thankful."

"Very fine for you, my dear," said Aunt Betsey: "you are too old to be sent to school, and then made a governess of."

"I only wish I were not," said Jessie.

Here a long discussion ensued between the Captain and Miss Burton, in which Jessie was occasionally called upon to take a part, by an

appeal from the former to her "good sense," or "better judgment," concerning the propriety of submitting Miss Annabella Burton,—the little girl now pouting on the settle,—to the horrors of a first-rate education, with a view to her becoming a governess. An elderly bachelor uncle in London, whom none of the present party had ever seen, proposed putting her to a good school for some years as a pupil; then making a teacher and learner of her in the same school, and finally launching her on life as a governess. The discussion was gradually warming into a quarrel, in spite of Jessie's quiet interference, when it was put a stop to by Miss Anna herself, who said suddenly, interrupting Captain Burford—

"But, Captain Burford, I don't want to be a governess."

"The devil you don't!" said the Captain in an angry tone; "pray then, little Miss, what may you want to be?"

"I want to be a lady, and marry an officer," was the reply, with a naughty toss of the head.

A general laugh put the disputants in good humour.

"But, you proud little minx," said the Captain, "you know Nelson is going to marry Jessie. They have been engaged ever since they were born."

"Oh! I know that," said Anna; "but I don't mean to marry Nelson."

"And pray on what officer may you have fixed your affections?" asked the Captain.

Again Anna tossed her head.

"But, my dear Anna," here interrupted Jessie, "if you mean to marry an officer, you must be very accomplished. You must play, and sing, and dance, and draw, and I know not what besides."

"Must I?" said the little girl, running towards her sister; "then perhaps I will go to school and learn all these things; and then, you know, I can marry when I leave school, and shouldn't need to be a governess. I should like to go to a grand school, Aunt Betsey, very much. Will you write and tell Uncle Timothy that I am very much obliged to him?"

Aunt Betsey was softened at once. She had no doubt that any girl possessing, as Anna did, the Burton beauty, *would* be sure to marry as soon as she left school; so she yielded, for once, to her co-trustees.

"I declare we are nearly all settled now," remarked the Captain, taking a very long pull at his pipe, and whiffing the smoke up the capacious chimney.

"There's Jessie, the farmer; Pynsent, the doctor;

Peter, the sailor; Anna, the—gov..... wife of the officer; and Charley—well, you must have some more schooling, my boy, and then we will see about you."

"I will help Jessie to manage the farm," said Charley submissively, putting a finishing touch into the eye of the Captain, whose picture he had been trying to take for the hundredth time.

"Very good! very good! So now let us have our rubber," exclaimed the Captain, laying aside his pipe.

Charley opened a small box that he took down from a bookshelf, and produced two packs of cards, which he placed opposite each other on the round table, and beside each pack four ivory markers. Aunt Betsey laid aside her knotting, and seated herself opposite Nelson, whilst the Captain took a chair placed by Peter, and had Jessie for a *vis-à-vis* and partner.

"Mind, Jessie," said the Captain, shuffling the cards, "that you return my lead, and remember how many trumps are out."

"May I put up your tricks, Captain Burford?" asked Anna, seating herself by his side.

"To be sure, Mrs. Colonel Somebody. Only remember to shove them together when they are six."

The game went on.

"Three by cards and two by honours," said the Captain, putting one marker above two others. "I must take a pinch of snuff upon the strength of it," and he pulled out a large round box, with a picture of Lord Nelson on the cover, and took such a gripe of tempting dust as his big fingers alone could take.

"Why did you trump my best diamond, Nelson?" asked Miss Burton; "we lost a trick by it."

"I thought all the others were out," replied Nelson, "and that my father would overtrump me. So I put down my best trump, and after all found that he had a diamond."

"Six tricks again, Captain Burford," said Anna, pushing the graduated cards up together.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," exclaimed Jessie, "I quite thought that the ace was out."

"There, my dear!" cried the Captain impatiently, "we shall lose the game by that oversight. How many, Anna? Two by honours and two by cards. Five and four are nine. In nine holes, by Jove! If you hadn't led your king, we should have been game, and now I dare say we shall lose it. Nine never won a game."

"I am very sorry, I really will try to play better,"

said Jessie, dealing very steadily, and turning up a deuce of clubs.

"Good luck under a black deuce," said the Captain. "Confound the cards! they come from Beggars'-row, sure enough. Two to one we shall lose the game; not a trump in my hand. I give it up."

"I thought, Captain Burford, that whist meant silence," said Miss Burton, leading the ace of trumps, and continuing to play all the honours. "It is really impossible to attend to one's game if you talk so much," she added, after making eight tricks without giving her adversaries breathing time.

"I told you so, Jessie: nine never won a game."

"Go on, Nelson, now it's your turn; pick 'em up. Nine—ten—eleven—twelve, by Jove! Six by cards and four by honours. A slam. There, Jessie! you lost that game; I vow I will never play with you again." And here Captain Burford got up, fumed about the room, and sat down again.

"You're wanted, please Miss," said the red-faced servant, coming in and addressing Jessie.

"Pynsent, will you take my hand for a few minutes?" said Jessie. "He plays better than I do, Captain Burford."

Pynsent took the cards, and Jessie went into the kitchen.

And such a kitchen! A huge dresser with three shelves covered with pewter plates, and the rest with white ware, all shining and clean as the sun on a sheet of snow. The tall chimney-piece, adorned with brass and tin candlesticks, also shining. The prickly dry furze and crisp sticks crackling on the hearth, and the tea-kettle singing lustily above them, proclaiming itself ready for Captain Burford's "toddy." Gammons of bacon, hams, and tongues, hanging from the wooden raft on the ceiling, and bread and cheese spread upon the white deal-table.

Jessie found a labourer's wife awaiting her, who wanted her husband's wages in advance, and medicine for children ill of the measles. She went upstairs to her large store-room, and procured the necessary articles. She returned and satisfied the poor woman, and promised to visit the children; then she went about some household matters with Dinah, and finally ordered in supper. When she returned to the hall, she was greeted by the Captain with—

"We've beaten them, Jessie; double, single, and the rub—four points. They saved their point in the first game, thanks to Pynsent, who would husband his trumps; but he plays a better game

than you do, because you think of other matters. We must tell Uncle James that we beat Aunt Betsey to shivers. I wonder he isn't here: he is afraid of you, Ma'am; he seldom comes here of an evening now."

Aunt Betsey blushed and frowned.

Here Charley began to put away the cards, and Miss Annabella condescended to help Dinah to lay the cloth! A plain substantial supper was spread, and a jug of Somersetshire cider, together with a steaming tea-kettle, appeared.

"Let me make the toddy," said Pynsent. "Give me the keys to get the rum, Jessie." Jessie gave the keys, and Pynsent, unlocking another cupboard, produced a right jolly-looking bottle.

"One slice of lemon, two lumps of sugar, a wine-glass full of rum, and the rest water," said the Captain.

"I know," replied Pynsent, going towards the tea-kettle, and pouring the last ingredient into the glass.

"Well, Miss Betsey," said Captain Burford "I hope you will all come to my ball tomorrow. I shall take it as an offence if you do not, as it will be our last kick-up before Nelson leaves, and one don't know when he may sail. Heigh ho! Why wouldn't you be a sailor, Nelson, if you

must go away? And I named you after the great Commander, too, on purpose. I hate sojering."

"I do not much enjoy children's dances," said Aunt Betsey, "but I shall be happy to avail myself of your kind invitation on this occasion."

"And you, Jessie, and the rest?" asked Captain Burford.

"Oh! I think you must excuse me," replied Jessie, "I must look after the harvest."

"Hang the harvest! you must come to my ball."

"I cannot dance well enough, and should not like to disgrace your guardianship," said Jessie, smiling; "I really am out of my element at a dance."

"Oh, Jessie, how unkind!" said Nelson.

Jessie glanced reproachfully at Nelson, and then at her half-mourning dress. The youth understood her, and was silent.

"Aunty will take Anna, and the three boys can do without me," said Jessie.

"Indeed we can't," cried the two younger ones; "nobody is so good at games as you are: it is worth a pound to play at blind-man's-buff with you."

"But you will not have blind-man's-buff tomorrow," said Jessie; "you must be steady and quiet, because all the grand people will be there."

"Then I sha'n't go," said Pynsent, "I hate grand people."

"That's more sincere than polite," said the Captain, "seeing that I consider myself a very grand person, and Aunt Betsey has no mean notion of her family."

"No, that she hasn't!" muttered Pynsent.

"Least said, soonest mended. I shall expect you all," said the Captain. "Mind, Jessie, no excuses! I should be miserable without your good-natured face; and as to Nelson, fie! for shame! how could you refuse, and you engaged to him ever since you were born? I remember it as if it was today. Nelson came into the world the 20th of June, 1815,—year memorable for the battle of Waterloo—that is why he must go into the army; and in the evening of that day I walked down here to ask why your father hadn't been to congratulate me, and drink his health. To my astonishment, I found that you were born the same day. Old school-fellows—old friends—son and daughter. We sat down at that identical round table, and called for the toddy. We drank one glass to Nelson's health, one glass to your health, and one to your marriage at some future day; and, by George, if we weren't as drunk as fiddlers! First time I ever saw your father more than a little merry, though those were days of

hard drinking. It was then I vowed I would call my boy, Nelson, after the great Commander, and destined him for the navy. Disappointed there. Your father looked through the old pedigree to find a grand family name for you. He was divided between Jessica and Annabella, but I inclined to the former, because I like the song of 'Jessie of Dumblane,' and so it was settled. He wanted to add 'Pynsent,' on account of that confounded family of Burton Pynsent, that he said you belonged to; but I suggested that it was a boy's name, so it was reserved for this younker here. Ah! those were happy days, weren't they, Miss Burton? Well, and so are these: we have no reason to complain. Now, Nel, past half after nine. 'Early to bed'—you know the rest."

There was a great shaking of hands, and a general rush to open the door, where the full-faced harvest-moon looked so magnificent overhead, that all went out to greet her, and to congratulate one another on the prospect of a continuance of fine weather and a good harvest.

And now, patient Reader, you and I will also emerge from our corner, and, wishing our new friends good-night, proceed to make some fresh acquaintances.

CHAPTER II.

"A doctor for near half a century,
He lived and laboured for the good of men:
Though called to watch the sick bed of the rich,
And earn the fee for care and 'tendance due,
He never shrank, at all unseemly hours,
From waiting on the poor man's couch of pain,
And living to alleviate the ills
That human nature is foredoom'd to bear."

Whilst you and I, gentle Reader, have been quietly, and, I hope, not quite unprofitably, employed in the hall at Fairfield, making acquaintance with a family of orphan children and their guardians, there has been much anxiety and some bustle within a few miles of us. Just when our little party were about to sit down to their rubber, Mr. Michelson was pacing impatiently the dining-room of Michelson Hall. He had just risen from his solitary dessert, and had left his wine-glass dry, and his plate unsoiled. One moment he would go to the window, throw up the sash, and look out upon the smooth lawn; the next he would unclose the door and listen, as if for footsteps;

then he would return to his fidgety walk, and mutter to himself. He was a tall, handsome man, of middle age, dressed in black, and rather, as the French would say, *tiré à quatre épingles*. His head was just beginning to be bald a little above the forehead, and his hair, naturally wavy and of a dark brown, was carefully brushed over the invidious space of white. His eyes were fine,—too fine, I would say; too large, too searching, too bright, almost too bold; your glance fell beneath them, you scarcely knew why, not exactly from personal shame, but from a kind of intuitive shame for him: they professed to be blue, but verged upon green; and if, to borrow again from the French tongue, so rich in figures, *le bleu et le vert se jurent*, it is not to be wondered at that they were so restless and yet so impudent. The nose was *un peu retroussé*—(French again! but what polite writer of the present refined age could say "turned-up," when speaking of the nose of a gentleman of ten thousand a year?). The lips were red and full, and concealed, or, more properly, were frequently parted to reveal, a magnificent set of teeth, as yet unsubmitted to the unkind hand of the dentist. Diamond studs adorned his shirt, which was defended by a well-clipped hedge of frills; and his shirt-collar was as stiff as starch could make it. He

was altogether an uncomfortably good-looking man.

At last the door opened.

"Well, Stephens, what news?" he said, as a tall, wary-looking butler entered.

"Miss Rutherford started by the mail for London this morning at seven, Sir. She had no luggage whatever, Sir. The Boots particularly remarked that she had no luggage."

"What had the Boots to do with her or her luggage? the impudent rascal!" said Mr. Michelson.

"Nothing whatever, Sir; only you told me to ask."

"Hold your tongue, and answer my questions!" said Mr. Michelson, a large vein in his capacious forehead becoming very prominent as he spoke. "Did Miss Rutherford make known her intention of leaving to any one?"

"No, Sir. The housemaid said that she heard her in her room moving about, at between five and six; but, as she was always an early riser, and frequently walked before breakfast, she thought nothing of it."

"Did she know whether she was in bed at all last night?"

"She thought not, Sir; it was near two o'clock before she went upstairs."

"I suppose I know that, since I was with her up to that hour in the drawing-room. Just answer my questions, and no more. Were the servants gone to bed when I went to my room last night?"

"All but me and Vigars, Sir."

"Ah! Vigars! He came into the drawing-room with tea,—then with candles,—then, as usual, with the keys. Tell me exactly what he said, when he returned to the kitchen, about Miss Rutherford. Come, Sir, no evasions! You are aware that I will find out."

"Why, Sir, he said nothing particular."

"What did he say that was not particular? Speak at once, and speak truth, or I will dismiss you."

"He only said, Sir, that you and Miss Rutherford seemed to be having a quarrel, and that he heard high words as he came through the hall."

"Go on: what more?"

"Nothing particular, Sir, that I can remember, except that Miss Rutherford was too high and mighty for her situation."

"The impudent scoundrel! What was Miss Rutherford's situation to him? And that was all?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Well, Stephens, I think you are a faithful servant enough, as times go, and I will trust to your discretion so far as to let you try and find out where Miss Rutherford is, supposing that she does not come back tomorrow, as I imagine she will. As companion to my late dear wife"—here Mr. Michelson heaved a sigh, and glanced at a mourning-ring—"I always thought it my duty to treat her with consideration. When Lady Charlotte died,—how long ago is it now, Stephens?"

"More than a year, Sir."

"When my wife died I felt that Miss Rutherford had still a claim upon me. Besides, Chatham was so fond of her that I knew he would be miserable if she left us; so, as you know, I offered her the situation of superintendent of my household, which she accepted. She was young and inexperienced; still I believe she did her duty. What do you think, Stephens?"

"Yes, Sir; your own daughter could never have been more careful and particular."

"Tush! Well, of course I am anxious to do what is right by her. In the first place to find out where she is gone; in the second, to let it be understood that she took offence at something I said to her concerning the management of the house; and having, as Vigars justly observed, too

high a spirit for her position in life, left me, without notice. You understand?"

"Yes, Sir."

"I believe it is well known that I always treated her as an equal; and therefore no one can suppose that she left me on account of any unkindness on my part."

"I should think not, Sir."

"Why do you speak with that tone, as if you thought I treated her too familiarly?"

"I didn't mean any tone, Sir."

"Then don't assume a tone. If Miss Rutherford does not return tomorrow, you must see the guard of the mail; find out whether she went all the way to London; follow her; make inquiries at the Sun, where the coach stops, and where she probably will be; see her, and give her a letter that I will write. I have no doubt you will find her at once. I know she had money, because I paid her only the day before yesterday."

"Very well, Sir."

"Let it be understood that I am particularly anxious to serve her, because my dear wife"—another glance at the mourning-ring, and a pressure of the eyes with the hand it ornamented—"recommended her to my care on her death-bed. Well, have you nothing to say? Don't look so surprised."

"I didn't mean to look surprised, Sir. Your orders shall be faithfully attended to, Sir."

"And now you may go. See that the servants do not make Miss Rutherford's sudden departure an excuse for aspersing her character. I believe they did not like her."

"Very well, Sir. Most of us liked her, Sir."

Here the butler left the dining-room, and found his fellow-servant Vigars in the hall, very near the door. The pair went quietly together into the butler's pantry.

"I never!" said Vigars, "but you was right to say what I said; for he would have poked it out of Sarah or Martha, and they might have told more than was convenient in the fright. Poor crittur! I don't think she'll ever come back. I never see such a way as she was in: trembling with passion, and her eyes streaming with tears, that she tried to hide when I came in; and master in a towering rage; he was standing close up to where she sat, and I believe he'd a' struck her, if I hadn't come in. I heard her say, 'I will leave you—I will never bear this—I would starve, die, rather!' And when I went in again they were at it still, only calmer; and so they went on from nine o'clock till near two in the morning."

"'Tis very odd," said Stephens, "but I don't

think my poor mistress ever really liked her, especially along at the last, though she was as submissive and attentive as any one could be, and nearly cried her heart out when she died. There was a un'appy 'ooman, Vigars, as Lady Charlotte wus! You never see any one die of a broken heart, if she didn't. She couldn't bear to be stinted at home, whilst she knew that thousands and thousands were spent in pictures and operas and all kinds of show. I shouldn't wonder if that wasn't why Miss Rutherford went away. I know I won't bear it long longer; and if it wasn't for Master Chatham's sake, I should have left long ago."

"We must have a proper housekeeper now, that's one comfort," said Vigars; "our table will be better served."

Whilst we leave Mr. Michelson and his household to their various meditations upon the sudden flight of Miss Rutherford, and allow a few days to pass, we must travel to London. Arrived there, we find ourselves compelled, tired as we are, to traverse several intricate streets, until we reach a second-rate hotel, situated in one of the many minor streets leading out of Piccadilly. We enter, and, ascending the stairs, attain a bedroom, in which several persons are assembled.

The object of attention to all seems to be a very

young and tiny baby, happily sleeping in a small clothes-basket, well wrapped up in flannels. A gentleman of kindly aspect and middle age, wearing a brown suit of clothes and a wig, is seated on a low chair, gazing on the infant, whilst a portly woman, the landlady of the hotel, stands by his side wiping her eyes. Another gentleman, and one or two servant girls, are in different parts of the room.

"I do not know what is to become of the poor infant, Sir," said the landlady to the gentleman in brown; "it do seem such a pity to send it to the workhouse."

"Will you kindly tell me all you know of the unfortunate mother, Ma'am?" he asked.

"Well, Sir, she came here two days ago, and asked for a bedroom. She was very handsome and well-dressed, and I let her have everything she wanted at once. She looked very unhappy and ill, but she said nothing to me, and I didn't like to take the liberty of asking any questions. She slept here; and the next morning, early, she told me to send for a surgeon of the name of Barnard, as she did not feel quite well. I asked where you lived, Sir; but she did not know, so we looked in the Directory, and found your address. You know the rest, Sir, better than I do."

"Ah, yes! poor creature! She scarcely spoke before all was over and she was in the agonies of death. So young! and to have left this unfortunate infant as a living legacy to the benevolent!"

"To the workhouse, I should think," here interrupted the other gentleman, who was also a surgeon.

"Poor innocent!" said the landlady, "I would take it, and proud to do it, if I was richer; but my good-man grumbles at feeding our own large family, and would never have a stranger added."

"The goodwill does you honour, Ma'am," said Mr. Barnard, "and I only wish such a kind heart could be found to shelter this poor child."

"Did the young woman leave any money?" asked Mr. Pilson, the other surgeon.

"She gave this purse into my hand, Sir," said the landlady, giving a handsome purse to Mr. Barnard, "just before you came, and told me to pay you and myself what was right; I have not even opened it yet."

The purse was found to contain between thirty and forty pounds, in bank-notes, sovereigns, and silver. The sovereigns were wrapped together in a piece of torn writing-paper, on which was writing in a female hand. The sheet had been torn cross-ways, so that only broken lines were legible. There

was no single complete sentence. The words "for ever . . . . acknowledge me as . . . . heartbroken vic . . . . make your cruel treatment known . . . . return to my mother till . . . ." was all that was written, together with the signature, "Sophia."

"There is not much to be made out of that," said Mr. Pilson.

"No, alas, no!" said Mr. Barnard, bending over the child; "but we must do our best to find the poor lady's friends, for the sake of this innocent. We will not send it to the workhouse yet, Ma'am. We will inquire; and then—and then—God knows. Perhaps it may not live, it is so small and weak."

"I will keep it for a week or so, Sir, whilst my husband is away, but—" said the landlady.

"You need not be alarmed, Ma'am; I will defray any expenses you may incur till the unfortunate mystery is cleared up. Poor dead lady! poor motherless babe!"

"There must be a magistrate, and an inquest, and advertisements, and depositions, and all the rest of it," gasped Mr. Pilson, "and the sooner the better!"

And so it was. All proper measures were at once resorted to; but no intelligence was obtained of the unfortunate lady, beyond what we already

know. Suspended by a small hair chain from her neck was a wedding ring, which was found to be of the same size as a very curious antique cameo that was taken from the third finger of her left hand. These, together with her wearing apparel, were carefully put aside. It was noted down that she had large dark violet eyes; an aquiline nose; a well-shaped but rather broad mouth; dark hair braided across a high forehead, and a dark pale complexion; that she was tall, and dressed in a straw bonnet lined and trimmed with pink, a brown silk dress, and a large black shawl with a broad Indian border.

She was buried respectably in the churchyard of St. James's, at Mr. Timothy Barnard's request, who, together with the landlady and one of the servants, attended the funeral. It cannot be said, as of some, that she was "unwept," for this worthy trio shed tears of pity over her grave, and uttered a prayer for her innocent child.

When all the expenses of her funeral, and those incurred at the Inn, were paid, her purse, as may be supposed, was empty; and there was the baby—a small, weak, puling, tender-limbed infant—to be taken to the workhouse.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Timothy Barnard to the landlady, "we might get her into one of those ex-

cellent institutions for female orphans, if we could but manage to nurse her a little longer. I have been a subscriber for many years to one, and have some interest."

"Very likely, Sir," said the good woman, "but them workhouse people won't pay nothing for bringing her up out of the workhouse; and it do seem a pity to let a lady's child go there."

Mr. Timothy Barnard went home to his house in Duke-street. He entered the little back room on the ground-floor, which was his study, and sat down in his armchair.

"What am I to do?" he said, muttering aloud to a large bookcase. "Old bachelor, quite unused to children. But the workhouse! Poor thing! poor thing! And the mother's look at me, and then at the child. Why did she send for me? Did she know me? They asked that at the inquest, and no wonder. And I promised to educate one of my nieces too. At my age to have to deal with two female children! Old fool! I'm always putting my foot in it. And why not the workhouse? She would never be the wiser, and just as happy, I dare say, if unconscious. But what have I to do with my money better than to help the orphan? Hasn't the great Father of the fatherless put her in my way? Doesn't he say to me, 'You have no

children, adopt one of mine'? Did the Saviour send them to the workhouse when they came to Him? Oh, Timothy, Timothy! what did the Apostle Paul say to thy namesake long ago, 'Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and of a good conscience.'"

Here Mr. Timothy Barnard paused in his conversation with the bookshelf; rose from his chair, and approached it; opened one of the glass doors, and took down a large Bible; re-seated himself, and turned to the Epistles to Timothy: in the first chapter of the first Epistle he found the words he had quoted. He read the chapter through, still aloud, as if to the furniture; then closing the sacred volume, covered his face with his hands, and was silent awhile.

"Very well, I will do it, please God," he said, rising again from his chair, rubbing his hands, and finally depositing them in the tails of his coat. He walked about the room with a pleased smile on his countenance, and whistled a tune of long ago, that he must have learnt in a Somersetshire hayfield. He suddenly caught sight of some letters that lay unopened upon the table, and came to an anchor before them. He opened one; the word "Appeal" was printed at the top. "Not now," he murmured, "female orphan first." He broke the seal of an-

other: "Dear me! there's Widow Eveleigh thanking me again, as if half an hour's advice and five penn'orth of drugs were worth so much gratitude. A third, "With Lady Singleton's compliments and best thanks," acompanied by a cheque for fifty pounds. "That will just do for her first year of babyhood," said he, putting the cheque and note into his desk. A fourth—this was rather a long letter, neatly written. He hemmed, as if to clear his voice for the benefit of the bookshelf, and read as follows:—

"*Fairfield, August* 23.

"My dear Uncle Timothy,

"As my aunt is not very well, she has requested me to answer your kind letter. We are all very much obliged to you for your generous offer of providing for one of us two girls. As I am now seventeen, and greatly wanted at home, to see to the farm and the younger children, I cannot avail myself of it; but my sister Annabella, who is only ten, will be very glad to do so. She will be ready by Christmas, or any time you may think proper. Indeed, my dear Uncle, we are very grateful to you; and Captain Burford, who met you at Fairfield, when you came there to pay the wedding visit, desires me to say, with his best respects, that

it is just what he expected from you. I wish you would come to Fairfield again. Although we have never seen you, I assure you we should give you a hearty welcome. As I am the eldest, my dear mother used to talk to me a great deal about you, and taught me to love you very much. I hope, please God, we shall get on very well. Everybody is very kind to us. Our good doctor has offered to take Pynsent as his apprentice, for nothing; so he is, so far, provided for. Captain Burford thinks he can get Peter into the navy soon, and Charles says he will stay at home and be a farmer; he is very clever, indeed, at almost everything. You see how God keeps his promise to 'the fatherless.' The crops are very good this year, and we are all strong and healthy, except perhaps Charley—he is not so strong as the rest of us. I hope you will excuse this long letter, and that you will write to us sometimes. Aunt Betsey desires her best compliments, and my brothers and sister unite with me in love and gratitude.

"I remain, my dear Uncle,

"Your affectionate and dutiful niece,

"JESSIE BURTON."

The good doctor wiped his eyes; then he looked over the letter again, and commented upon it.

"Very pretty letter! Nice, natural little girl, I am sure. Good sort of fellow, that Captain Burford. 'My dear mother'—blessed angel! If she hadn't married that proud, weak man, she would have been happier: she was too plain and humble-minded for him. Dear sister! I wish I had seen her once more. No use repining. Poor children! all in a fair way of getting on in the world. Aunt Betsey indeed!—prouder than her brother, and weaker: thinking of nothing but her beauty. That won't carry her to heaven, or go with her to the grave."

Mr. Timothy Barnard rang the bell. An elderly woman appeared.

"Tell John to bring the carriage," he said.

"The carriage have been at the door more than an hour, Sir. We was beginning to be afraid somethink was the matter," replied the housekeeper.

"Bless me! I quite forgot myself. All my patients waiting! Give me my hat, Mrs. Hicks, and cane, and gloves. Dinner at seven: good morning."

Mr. Barnard drove to see a great many patients, in a comfortable carriage and pair. During his drive his thoughts were occupied by his orphans, and he occasionally communicated them to the carriage or the coachman's back, to which both

were well accustomed, and of which they took about equal notice. After having passed through most of the fashionable streets of St. James's, and stopped every five or ten minutes at different doors in that locality, to feel pulses, examine tongues, hear complaints, and write prescriptions, he called out to the coachman—

"Peckham, John."

"Very good, Sir," was the reply; and to Peckham they drove.

The carriage drew up before a small, neat house, with a twelve-foot-square flower-garden in front, situated at the end of a small row of buildings, in a broad, airy road. After London, it looked quite a country scene. There was actually a cock crowing somewhere behind the houses, and two or three dusty birds were chirping on the railings that surrounded them. A mistaken butterfly was disputing the possession of a brown plant of mignonette with a deluded bee, and something very like trees was visible in the distance.

The doctor walked up the little garden, and was met at the door by a neat, almost ladylike-looking woman, in widow's weeds.

"How do you do, Mrs. Eveleigh?" he said, holding out his hand kindly.

"I am so glad to see you, Sir! how kind of you

to come!" said Mrs. Eveleigh, leading the way into a neat room, the walls of which were covered with portraits of every size and sort.

"Not kind, my dear Madam," replied Mr. Barnard; "my visit is selfish: you have not yet begun the little school we talked of, and I wished to ask you whether you would like to take charge of a motherless infant instead."

"Oh yes, Sir! ever since I lost my own baby, I have wished to have one to nurse. Besides, it would be an object, Sir, and help to fill up the great void which *his* death has left in my heart."

The widow's eyes filled with tears.

"Just so! just so!" said Mr. Barnard hastily. "It is right that you should know the child's history, though we will keep it secret from the world." And he began to relate the sad tale that the reader already knows.

"I feel that I can trust you, Mrs. Eveleigh, because you have a kind heart. We shall not quarrel about money matters. By the bye, you will want some money in advance. You may be able to go on with your fancy work, or whatever it is, at odd times; and so, with God's blessing, make a living of it."

The worthy doctor put a ten-pound note into the widow's hand.

"God will bless you, Sir, I am sure," she said. "*He* told me, Sir, that if you would choose any of his best pictures, as a small token of gratitude, and in remembrance of him—"

"Another time, Mrs. Eveleigh, another time. I should like to see the child about once a month, sometimes here, and sometimes at my own house; and if it is ill, send for me directly. The nurse shall bring her to you tomorrow. Take care of yourself. How is the poor man next-door? I must just look in upon him. Keep up your spirits, and try to submit to the will of God in all things. I believe your poor husband is in heaven, and that ought to be comfort enough for us. Good bye."

"Good bye, Sir, and may the Lord bless and preserve you!" said the poor widow, returning to her solitary apartment, and gazing abstractedly upon the portrait of her husband, who, a clever but unknown artist, had died of consumption about a month before, and over whose protracted sufferings Mr. Timothy Barnard had watched with the tenderness of a parent and the skill of an accomplished surgeon.

CHAPTER III.

" Ah, Beauty! of all things on earth,
How many thy charms most desire!
Yet beauty with youth has its birth,
And beauty with youth must expire."

CHARLES WOLFE.

JESSIE and Pynsent kept their resolution of remaining at home on the evening of Captain Burford's juvenile ball. They started their aunt and the three younger children in the covered car that they kept for journeying and jaunting, and wished them a merry evening. Miss Burton looked magnificent, and very handsome in her black satin gown, jet ornaments, and black velvet turban and feathers. Jessie declared to Pynsent, when she was gone, that she certainly was the finest woman in the world, and that she did not wonder at her being still a little vain of her beauty.

" She certainly is beautiful," said Pynsent earnestly, " and Anna is just like her; like poor Papa too, who was the handsomest man I ever saw, more's the pity."

"Why 'more's the pity,' Pynsent?"

"Because the pride of family and of beauty has been the ruin of us all; so Captain Burford says, and I believe it," answered Pynsent.

"Aunt Betsey might have been well married fifty times, so Captain Burford told me, if she hadn't fixed her mind on Mr. Michelson, who admired her, but chose to marry a title," said Jessie.

"I suspect," said Pynsent smiling, "that she thinks she shall meet Mr. Michelson tonight. The truth was, that he jilted her, and so made Papa very bitter against him by so doing. By the bye, have you heard that Miss Rutherford is gone from the Hall?"

"Yes, I am so sorry: I quite liked her; she was very much to be pitied, having no friends. But, Pynsent, we must not lose our quiet evening here; let us go into the cornfields, and look after the men."

The brother and sister walked away arm-in-arm. They crossed a newly-mown meadow, with grass as smooth and bright as green velvet. The sun cast his evening rays upon it, and made it shine like gold. The hedges on all sides were covered with wild roses, honeysuckle, and old-man's-beard; and a pleasant perfume filled the air. The next field was the cornfield, where men, women, and children

were working lustily. Here the women were binding the golden treasure with the strong straw wisp, there the men were forming the sheaves into shocks, and everywhere the children were filling their arms and aprons with the stray ears, their own little store. Smiles and curtseys welcomed the young master and mistress, who were soon as busily at work as the rest, helping one to bind a sheaf, or another to shape the shock.

Pleasantly there rose a harvest song on the evening air, as the labourers prepared to return to their homes, having finished their day's work, and left the field in stacks, ready for carrying. Pleasant the flushed face and cheerful smile of Jessie, as she returns their nods and curtseys, and seats herself by her brother's side; and still more pleasant her clear sweet voice, as it rises, as if of its own accord, to join the song of the harvesters. You do not need the beauty of your little sister, sweet Jessie; cheerfulness and good-humour, and a certain natural dignity of bearing, the fruit of an honest mind, are more charming, after all, than regular features and a symmetrical shape, when consciousness of beauty dwells with them.

"Now, Jessie, you must stop singing, and talk to me," said Pynsent, putting his arm affectionately round his sister's waist. "Do you know

that I think a great deal of what Papa said about never selling Fairfield. I should be very sorry to sell the dear old place, and these pretty fields, and all that we have been used to so long."

"We can never sell it, Pynsent," said Jessie.

"Then we must work hard to pay off the mortgages which Papa and his forefathers raised from time to time, rather than sell a portion of the estate to clear it. I am determined this shall be the end for which I will strive."

"But," said Jessie, "the great drawback is having to pay more than a hundred a year interest, before we can lay by to clear off the principal."

"Small beginnings produce great endings, Jessie. It is so in all the biographies of great men."

Jessie smiled.

"Another drawback," said Pynsent, "is Aunt Betsey's fifty pounds a year: that has to be raised also, before we can begin to reckon our own income, and the best years, the estate doesn't produce more than three hundred and fifty."

"A thought has struck me," said Jessie: "you know Aunt Betsey never used to pay anything for her board as long as Papa lived; but now she insists on giving us twenty pounds a year. Suppose we make a point of putting by that twenty pounds, which is clear gain to us, as a beginning."

"Capital!" said Pynsent; "then we may be able to screw five pounds here and there besides, when the children are provided for, as there will not be so much expense at home. The worst of it is, that it seems so long before I shall begin to work: four or five good years—what an age!"

"After all," said Jessie thoughtfully, "I almost agree with Captain Burford in thinking that it would have been best to sell the estate, and invest the money that remains profitably; I mean, after the mortgage is paid off, and a sufficiency reserved for our education, and giving you boys a fair start in life."

"Very little would remain to us, I fear," said Pynsent, "after all that was done; besides, Papa's last wish should be as binding as if it was his last will:—by no means to sell the estate, and never to let an acre of it fall into Mr. Michelson's hands. What I should like would be to get very rich,—which I shall do, of course,—and then buy the whole estate of you four: you could come and keep house for me; Anna will be sure to marry, and the boys will be better provided for."

"You are 'romancing' now, I think, Master Pynsent. But why am I not to marry?"

"I don't think you will ever marry; you know the Burtons have always been old maids. And that

reminds me of Captain Burford's folly about you and Nelson; I hope you don't think of it, Jessie. Nelson will be sure to rise in the army, he is so steady, and he will either marry some beauty or an heiress, take my word for it."

"How absurd you are, Pynsent!" said Jessie, colouring; "you talk of Nelson's marrying, at seventeen, as if he were thirty."

"Because Captain Burford talks about it and thinks about it," said Pynsent bluntly, "and it may make you very uncomfortable some one of these days."

A silence ensued, during which Jessie looked unusually thoughtful.

"You are quite right, Pynsent," she said at last. "Now we had better go home, as the dews are falling, and I have a great deal to do. We must remember that *our* great object is to do all we can for the good of the younger ones; and in the first place, to pay off the mortgages by degrees,—say a hundred pounds at a time. Oh dear me! it would take one four or five years at least to save one hundred, and more than a century to save two thousand. What old people we should be!" Jessie laughed heartily at the picture that presented itself to her imagination, of Pynsent and herself, an old bachelor and old maid, of nearly a hundred

years old, living together in the place of their birth.

"*Nil desperandum* is my motto," said Pynsent.

"Crest, a pill-box; coat-of-arms, three bottles rampant, and a case of surgical instruments couchant?" asked Jessie.

When Jessie was quietly seated at her work, and Pynsent was regaling her ears with some medical case he was reading, Captain Burford's juvenile ball was at its climax. The whole youthful respectability of the town and neighbourhood had assembled, and many of the elders with them, and were amusing themselves alternately with dancing and games, until the old house rang with music and merriment. Annabella was, as had been predicted, the beauty of the ball-room; and it was ridiculous to see her surrounded by her throng of little admirers, one saying, "Now, Anna, dance with me;" another, "You promised to dance with me next, you know you did;" a third, "Very well, Miss, I won't ask you again," and so on; whilst the young lady seemed to enjoy it just as much as if she were sweet seventeen, and boasted an elegant tablette, on which the names of a score of partners were regularly inscribed.

Anna was a sparkling little beauty, that fascinated at first sight. Black eyes, as bright and pier-

cing as an eagle's ; black hair falling in long ringlets down her shoulders ; a clear brown complexion and a colour like "the red red rose;" lips really like the "double cherry," full and pouting; the nose slightly aquiline, but small and delicate: she was a perfect little gipsy, and it was as impossible to see her and not to spoil her, as it would be not to admire her. She was perfectly conscious of all this, and as consummate a little coquette as you could light upon. She almost knew already when to kill a tiny lover by a sudden shot from under the long black eyelashes, and how to hold him in thrall by her naughty flirting ways. Truly, if "the child is father of the man," "the girl is mother of the woman;" and, if we read aright, without the severe castigation of suffering and sorrow, Annabella Burton will be ruined by vanity and admiration—her beauty will be her curse.

The Captain had arranged whist-tables in another room, whither most of the papas and mammas had retired; but a little before supper they came by degrees into the dancing-room. The children were in the heart of an old dance called "the Sighing Dance," which was occasioning much anxiety and amusement. A little beau knelt before his chosen belle, sighed, and then whirled her round the room, and finally danced himself into her chair,

leaving her to kneel, in her turn, before some other swain, and perform a similar movement with him. Anna had, as usual, more than her share of "sighers," and was standing amongst a group of girls of all ages, flushed and fluttering with excitement, waiting to see whom Chatham Michelson would choose, whose turn it was to kneel. Just at the moment, Mr. Michelson entered the room. Nelson rushed up to him, and said, "Now Mr. Michelson, you must sigh for some one: kneel down here and choose;" and he led him in front of the little expectant group. What a beating of young hearts at that moment! Whom would the great man select?

Mr. Michelson knelt on one knee good humouredly; put his hand on his heart theatrically; looked searchingly upon the many sweet faces before him, gave a long-drawn sigh, and presented his hand to Anna. The child tripped away with him, and danced him to his seat, to the amusement of the by-standers, then stood glancing archly round, as if to see whom she should choose.

"Sigh for me, Anna," whispered a little boy.

"No, for me," said another; "I haven't been out a long time."

"For me," said Chatham Michelson.

Anna shook her curls, pointed her toes, and

danced up to Mr. Michelson, knelt down, sighed, and was soon whirling that gentleman round, with a view to retiring amongst the children. But when they had completed their turn, he took her up in his arms and kissed her. Anna was indignant, and struggled to free herself, upon which he sat down and placed her on his knee.

"What is your name, little beauty?" he said, as she resolutely got off his knee, and was about to run away. "Come here; I won't kiss you any more, upon my word I won't."

"Annabella Burton," she replied.

"I thought so," said Mr. Michelson, whilst a shade half of admiration, half of dislike, passed over his face. "Is that tall lady yonder your aunt?"

"Yes," said Anna, "I thought you knew her; she knows you very well."

Anna glanced at her tall, magnificent aunt, who was watching them with an attention so intense that she seemed scarcely to breathe.

"Do you think she would dance with me?" asked Mr. Michelson.

"I dare say she would," said Anna: "I will run and ask her;" and off she flew, without waiting for further permission.

Captain Burford and Nelson were forming the last country dance, in which old and young were to

join; and Aunt Betsey was debating with herself whether she would dance or not.

"Mr. Michelson wants to know whether you will dance with him," said Anna abruptly.

A blaze of colour flushed through the *soupçon* of rouge that Aunt Betsey had rubbed in, and proved that she was not too old to blush.

"Decidedly not," she replied promptly.

"Not with Mr. Michelson?" asked Anna, astonished. "I am sure you will, Aunty; I will bring him."

And off she tripped again, begged Mr. Michelson to make haste, or she should not have a partner, led him across the room, and planted him before her aunt.

"I know you will, Aunty," she said coaxingly.

"May I have the honour?" said Mr. Michelson. He looked at Miss Burton, she was pale as death: *he* had looked upon the past as past, *she* had not. He was slightly taken aback. The music struck up—he offered his arm. Scarcely knowing what she did, she accepted it, and he led her to the bottom of the dance.

Twenty years had elapsed since Miss Burton and Mr. Michelson had met. At that time they were as much in love with one another as their natures would let them. They were not exactly engaged,

but everybody supposed they would marry, because the gentleman was his own master, and the lady a reigning beauty, the toast of the country. He had money, she had none; but then her family, though decayed, was better than his. His father had won his wealth in trade, and had built Michelson Hall, given his son a first-rate education, and died just as he was one-and-twenty. Miss Burton was a few years older than he was, and in all the full rich beauty of five-and-twenty. He left her, without absolutely proposing to her, to travel; and being of a nature to devote himself to the last thing or person that attracted his attention by personal beauty, soon forgot her in his devotion to other objects. Beauty, whether in nature or art, was his bane. The last lovely woman—fine picture—well-modelled statue—curiously wrought jewel—it mattered not what, that struck upon his acute sense of what was graceful and pleasing to the eye, fixed his thoughts to intensity, until some new object presented itself to replace the last, and be again replaced. His eye, and not his mind, was attracted. He could appreciate nothing justly that was not visible, and at a glance presented to him as beautiful. It was, therefore, no wonder that he soon forgot Miss Burton. He roamed the world in search of variety and amusement several years,

during which period he never visited Michelson Hall. In Italy he met Lady Charlotte Newington, a beautiful but portionless flower of the aristocracy. Her rank tempted him to propose for her, and he was accepted. Probably, during all these years, he scarcely gave a thought to Miss Burton, nor did he imagine that she could think much of him. She, however, ambitious of worldly position and trusting to her personal appearance, refused many excellent offers, under the impression that when he returned home he would renew his attentions and marry her. When she heard that he was actually married, her pride was wounded to the quick. To show the world that she did not care, she determined to accept the first proposal that was made her. An elderly gentleman of some wealth, a widower and a confirmed invalid, came forward; she accepted him. The death of his sister caused a delay, and his own death, finally, prevented the marriage. These circumstances told sad tales upon Miss Burton's beauty; and having no more valuable mental attractions to help out her decaying charms, she received no more proposals. Mr. Michelson soon tired of Lady Charlotte, and neglected her. He became a great amateur in pictures, and connoisseur in operas and ballets, not to mention a persevering admirer of the "Belle of the

season." As he had always a certain power over women—partly from his fascinating manners, partly from his undaunted boldness—he managed to make a great many of the sex uncomfortable, and his own wife miserable. From London to the Continent, and from the Continent to London, he was constantly on the move, and seldom visited his place in Somersetshire for more than a few weeks at a time. A few months after his wife's death, in Italy, he had come to Michelson Hall, accompanied by her former companion, a Miss Rutherford, a very handsome girl, who held the dubious post of superintendent of his household, and who had been recommended to Lady Charlotte during their residence abroad. His son, a boy of about fifteen, was also at home; he was destined for the army.

After Lady Charlotte's death, the neighbours called on Mr. Michelson, who appeared to be in great grief. Amongst them was Captain Burford, his old schoolfellow and *quondam* friend. His son Chatham took a fancy to Captain Burford and Nelson, and they were a good deal together. It may be well to say that the name Chatham was derived from the Earl of Chatham, who had been the godfather of Mr. Michelson, and whose property of Burton Pynsent adjoined that of Michel-

son Hall. The name descended to his grandson, who knew enough of history to be proud of it. This property of Burton Pynsent had been a sad stitch in the side of the late Mr. Burton, of Fairfield, who always imagined that it was, of right, his, and that the Earl of Chatham was an interloper, because a remote branch of his family, Sir William Pynsent, had left it to the Earl.

Mr. Michelson and Miss Burton now met for the first time since their young days. They stood opposite one another in the country dance, but neither spoke a word. Miss Burton's resolute pride and splendid stiffness—for splendid it really was—awed even Mr. Michelson. She sailed through the dance with him majestically, giving him the tips of her fingers to hold; sailed to her seat when it was concluded, just touching his arm; seated herself, with an imperial bow, and left him to his thoughts,—not his thoughts, properly to speak, but to his eyesight. And still she was shortly after thinking of the possibility of becoming Mrs. Michelson, of Michelson Hall; whilst he considered her really a very handsome woman, with a carriage quite to be admired for its stateliness and grace.

When the party was breaking up he again got hold of Anna, and gazed upon her childish beauty with admiration.

Captain Burford came up, and, giving Anna a tap on her head, said he was sure she was tired now.

"Oh no, Captain Burford, I could dance two or three hours more," said the child.

"Tell Jessie I am very angry with her," said the Captain: "she might have come, and Pyncent too. Tell her, we won't come to the harvest-home."

"Oh, you mustn't be angry with them," said Anna, throwing her arms round the Captain and looking up into his face, "and you must come to the harvest-home: we shall have no fun without you. Will you come to our harvest-home?" she added, turning to Mr. Michelson.

Mr. Michelson smiled, and said he should be very happy, but he had no invitation.

"Captain Burford will invite you,—won't you, Captain Burford? and Aunty; and so would Jessie and Pysent, if they were here. Aunty, will you invite Mr. Michelson to our harvest-home?"

Misss Burton was coming, cloaked and shawled, to fetch Anna, when she was thus suddenly taken aback. She bowed grandly, muttered "Very happy," and sailed on, beckoning to Anna to follow her.

Captain Burford assisted Miss Burton into the car, and Mr. Michelson put Anna in after her, inflicting another insult on her dignity by another kiss. The boys were soon seated, and the little party again jogged homewards, all more or less flattered by Mr. Michelson's attention.

The harvest-home took place two or three days afterwards. All the children, except Pynsent, were in the wheat-field the greater part of the day, and Nelson was with them. Towards evening Captain Burford and Pynsent arrived, and succeeded in bringing Miss Burton to the field. Jessie was here, there, and everywhere, with Nelson pretty generally by her side: now going to the house, to superintend the drawing of cider; now in the field, encouraging the labourers; anon accompanying the teeming waggon to the wheat-mow, patting the honest horses as she went along.

The last waggon-load was on its way homeward, and the little gleaners were busily picking up the scattered ears of corn that it had left behind, when Mr. Michelson, accompanied by a dog, made his appearance through the gate at the further end of the field. Anna spied him first, and ran towards him.

"Oh, I am so glad you are come!" she ex-

claimed; "we shall be going to supper directly, and shall have such fun!"

"But I am not looking for supper," he replied; "I have been beating up partridges, against the 1st of September. Will you let me shoot over your farm?"

The little maiden drew herself up.

"We don't call it a farm, but an estate," she said.

Mr. Michelson smiled, and walked towards Captain Burford, who came to meet him.

"Are you really come to the harvest-home?" asked the Captain doubtfully.

"No, I am simply come for a walk.'"

Here Jessie appeared, with her apron full of wheat-ears, and her bonnet adorned with corn-flowers, and wreathed with wild convolvulus by the boys.

"Captain Burford, make haste!" she cried; then suddenly perceiving a stranger, she was about to turn away, when the Captain beckoned to her, and she went to him.

"Miss Burton, my Nelson's little wife, Mr. Michelson," said he proudly, as he took the blushing girl by the hand, and presented her in form.

"I told you Mr. Michelson would come, Jessie," said Anna triumphantly.

Jessie had a prejudice against Mr. Michelson, and bent, for her, very stiffly; but when that gentleman offered his hand, and hoped they should be better acquainted, she yielded hers, with a virtuous effort to shake off ill-feeling.

The boys appeared, calling lustily for Jessie. She curtseyed to Mr. Michelson, and walked away, followed by him and the Captain. She passed her aunt, who was sailing on with dignity.

"You cannot do less than ask Mr. Michelson in, Jessie," said she.

Jessie opened her eyes with astonishment.

"You need not stare so, my dear; it is mere civility: we used to be acquainted."

"Papa did not like him, and was not in a position to visit him," said Jessie simply.

"Years ago, my dear. Besides, common hospitality—"

The gentlemen came up. Mr. Michelson took off his hat grandly; Miss Burton curtseyed grandly. It was a treat to see them; and Jessie looked at her wheat-ears, to hide her laughter.

They all walked on together until they came to the door of the house. Mr. Michelson professed to be taking leave. Miss Burton looked at Jessie.

"Will you walk in, Sir?" said she timidly.

"Oh, do come in," echoed Anna, who held Mr. Michelson's hand.

Mr. Michelson said, "Thank you," and entered, very much to Aunt Betsey's satisfaction.

"Jessie! Jessie!" screamed Pynsent, "where are you all?"

"Here," said Jessie, opening the door.

"Well, come along; they are all waiting."

Pynsent started at seeing a stranger.

"This is Pynsent, the eldest son," said Captain Burford. "Pynsent, Mr. Michelson."

Pynsent bowed.

"About the age of Chatham," said Mr. Michelson; "strange that their names should have a certain connection. I believe you belong to the Pynsent family?"

"In the seventieth generation," said Pynsent.

"We are decidedly the remaining branch of it," said Aunt Betsey proudly.

"Will you come and see them at supper, Captain Burford?" said Pynsent.

After a few complimentary speeches they all went into the kitchen, where the labourers and their wives and children were seated at the huge table, on which was placed a plentiful supper of good homely food. Jessie, and the rest of the young ones, were soon employed in helping their

guests, whilst Captain Burford cracked jokes and drank cider with them all by turns. Mr. Michelson talked to Miss Burton and looked at Jessie, who, although not handsome, had such a winning smile and bright complexion, that he must, perforce, admire her. There was an occasional expression of anxiety in his countenance, that Jessie, who was a reader of character, noticed. Perhaps, in spite of other scenes and new people, he was thinking of Miss Rutherford, whose sudden departure was still unaccounted for. Jessie once ventured to ask if she had left him, adding, that she knew her slightly; but the forbidding look that accompanied the "It is not quite settled yet," prevented any further question.

"Uncle James! Uncle James!" shouted Annabella, as a portly man entered the kitchen, and, just glancing round, retreated as suddenly as he had appeared.

All the children were after him, and in a few moments hanging about him in the hall. All their entreaties could not induce him to return with them.

"I only looked in, my dearies, for a minute. I am tired to death. I have been harvesting all day, and just came to see what you were all about; my horse is waiting at the door."

"You must stop, Uncle. You never come now; you don't care for us. Only this once, Uncle, to please us;" and such like appeals were made in vain—Uncle James was soon in his saddle again.

"I will come soon, my lovies, and stay a long time. Good bye; drink my health, mind," and away he trotted.

"I am sure he saw Mr. Michelson and Aunt Betsey together," whispered Jessie to Pynsent, "and so went away."

"There is one thing I am determined upon, and that is, I will never fall in love," said Pynsent.

"You are wanted to lead the 'Harvest Home,' Jessie," said Peter, interrupting his brother and sister.

A great many songs had been sung, and a variety of toasts given, amongst the jolly party of labourers. Captain Burford fancied they had had enough of the strong "Zomerzet," and accordingly looked at his watch.

"Here you are, Jessie. Now for the song!" he said, as she re-entered the kitchen.

She began the following harvest song, in the chorus to which everybody present joined; indeed most of the voices were heard in the song itself. The old kitchen echoed with the sounds, and the

hams and flitches in the raft shook with the beating of time, so vigorously executed by the more musical of the party.

HARVEST HOME.

Reap, boys, reap! and let the sharpen'd sickle
Cut down cheerily the full-ear'd grain;
'Ware dark clouds—the weather it is fickle:
Reap, boys, reap, and let's forestal the rain:
Then shall we
Gallantly
Earn our Harvest Home.

Work, boys, work! and bind the golden treasure
Quickly up into the teeming sheaves;
Raise the shocks! we all shall feel the pleasure
That hard labouring behind it leaves;
Then shall we
Worthily
Earn our Harvest Home.

Load, boys, load! and fill the roomy waggon,
Then drive carefully the patient team;
Help, all hands, and let's forego the flagon
Till old Sol withdraws his latest beam;
So shall we
Steadily
Earn our Harvest Home.

Drink, boys, drink! our labour it is ended;
Blow, ye winds, and fall, ye rain and hail.
Drink, boys, drink! our treasure is defended,
Ready now for winnow and for flail;
Thus have we
Honestly
Earn'd our Harvest Home.

CHAPTER IV.

"Nay, shrink not from the word 'farewell,'
As if 'twere friendship's final knell;
Such fears may prove but vain:
So changeful is life's fleeting day,—
Whene'er we sever, hope may say
'We part to meet again.'"—BARTON.

In the course of a few months the happy family at Fairfield was scattered, and several of its members turned adrift upon the wide, wild ocean of life, to begin their nautical education, and learn, as best they might, how to battle with the elements, and guide their ship to the various ports at which she was destined to stop during her course, supposing she was not wrecked at her outset.

The party who met together to laugh at the jovial uproar of a Harvest Home, were, by the following New Year's Day, reduced to one-half. Mr. Michelson was the first to take his departure from the country. All the butler's inquiries after Miss Rutherford proved unavailing; and Mr.

Michelson went to London, and thence abroad, in less than a month after her sudden departure, for what purpose nobody but himself knew. He had called once or twice at Fairfield, and managed to revive all Miss Burton's ancient ambitious hopes. Laugh not, ye youthful belles, at poor Aunt Betsey, who, on the very shady side of forty, has been getting up her old taste for flirtation, her old beauty, and her old affection, at sight of her old lover. It is melancholy to see life so wasted; and still more melancholy to know that the still fascinating lover is only amusing himself with her weakness and laughing at her folly; but he departed, and again left behind him the heart-burnings and sickness of hope that he had left years agone. Oh, ye youthful belles, pity, but do not laugh at Aunt Betsey; and above all, lay in such a store of mental riches yourselves during the years of your grace and loveliness, that you may have what she has not when your charms fade—a well-cultivated and religious mind.

Nelson was the next to leave. With various hopes and fears, aspirations and regrets, he bade farewell to his native town and native country. His father kept a brave face at the parting, but was sad at heart. Ten years in India! Before his boy returned from his long self-exile, he might

be in his grave. Nelson, too, began to realize that melancholy truth when it was too late, and his courage sank when he thought of it. The land of his dreams—the glory of his dreams—the fame of his dreams—all melted into night-vapours before the waking sense of a ten years' separation from those he loved. Poor Jessie, too,—she did not hide her tears, but let them fall on her sister's face when she nestled up to her, and tried to comfort her, sobbing her own child-heart out in her attempts at consolation. They all loved and esteemed the quiet, straightforward, resolute Nelson; as boys and girls always esteem those who, whilst they attend to their studies, still prove themselves bold and gallant. The sailor and the soldier were mingled in his nature, and we are mistaken if he does not prove himself as brave an officer in the Indian army as his father did in the Indian navy. Jessie had worked him a purse, into which Anna had put her only crooked sixpence for luck, which he was never to take out of the purse if he were ever so poor. He had begged a tress of Jessie's bright golden hair, and promised her a tiger's skin in return for it; at which she shuddered, and entreated him not to run into danger. Very natural and very affecting were the little boy and girl

tokens of friendship exchanged between the pair; and Captain Burford was pleased to see that the prospect of separation warmed what he called his son's "north-casters," meaning his feelings, "into a more south-westerly breeze."

Captain Burford's last present to his son was the Holy Bible, in which he had written the words, "Fight the good fight of faith."

"Read it, boy, and never be ashamed of it," he said solemnly; "I have weathered many a storm, and been on strange waters, but have always found that book my surest compass."

And so Nelson departed.

Peter was the next to leave the house of his birth, and to brave the dangers of the ocean. He went as midshipman in a gallant ship, under a gallant commander, and was too brave to shed a tear; albeit he made many wry faces to restrain it. Everybody missed the merry, joyous Peter, and none so much as his twin-sister Anna. But her turn came next.

Her sister had been hard at work for her ever since the arrival of their Uncle Timothy's letter; and perhaps the necessity of exertion had been the best cure for the sorrow she felt at her friend Nelson's departure. How to make smart new frocks out of their poor Mamma's dresses, now for the

first time brought to light; how to cut and contrive pieces of muslin and calico to the best advantage, and to direct the young workwoman to do the same, was an addition to Jessie's daily tasks, which filled up the small leisure she might have found for wondering whether Nelson would think of her when absent. Moreover Anna was so wild and wilful, that her loving heart mourned when she considered that the discipline of a school was not, perhaps, the best kind of training for her; and she spent many a stray half-hour in talking tenderly to the child, and praying her to be good.

Captain Burford took his little ward to London. They had a pleasant but fatiguing journey. Anna was much admired, much questioned, and much flattered, by her different coach companions, and soon recovered her spirits. She talked incessantly until she fell asleep at night, in Captain Burford's arms, and awoke, in the early morning, in London.

"5, Duke-street," said Captain Burford, to the driver of the hackney-coach; cabs were not then as plentiful as they are now.

Uncle Timothy, in his dining-room, by a large fire, fast asleep in his easy-chair. A fine tabby cat asleep on his knee; the table covered with a tea and coffee service; cold meat on the side-

board, and candles burnt low. A ring at the door-bell. Up starts Uncle Timothy—down tumbles Puss in surprise. Such a thundering knock! Out goes Uncle Timothy, and stumbles over his housekeeper, muttering, "Bless me! bless me!" In blusters Captain Burford, shakes hands with Uncle Timothy, pushes Anna forwards, and stands still to see what impression she makes.

"Come in, little girl, come in," is the only visible, or rather audible, effect of the impression.

Anna goes in, and then holds out her hand, and says, "How do you do, Uncle Timothy? thank you for putting me to school."

So far Jessie had tutored her, but not to restrain the tears that came into her eyes.

Uncle Timothy shook hands with her, looked at her, and exclaimed—

"Bless me! the father and aunt all over."

"Wouldn't you like to come upstairs, Miss?" said the housekeeper.

"Oh! very much indeed," said poor Anna, hastening out of the room.

No sooner was she upstairs, than she began to cry very heartily.

"Don't cry, that's a dear," said Mrs. Hicks, the housekeeper. "There aint a better, kinder man in the world than your uncle; only he's odd at first."

"I can't stay here—I must go home again—I won't go to school," said Anna.

"It's all new to you now, my dear; but you will soon get used to everything. We'll go and see London by-and-by, and all the fine sights. I dare say you never see a Christmas pantomime?"

"A what?" said Anna, brightening up.

"Oh, such a sight! we shall see. But now take off your bonnet. Dear, dear, there's curls!"

And so Mrs. Hicks coaxed and flattered Anna into tranquillity, and finally conducted her down to breakfast.

Uncle Timothy shakes hands with her again, and pats her on the head; and good Captain Burford gives her a hearty kiss, which nearly makes her cry again; but she thinks of the Christmas pantomime and all the London sights, and cheers up. Uncle Timothy and Captain Burford, though to all appearance very different sort of people, have still many points of resemblance, as indeed most of us have. They soon get on very well together, and whilst they are talking, Anna makes a very good breakfast; after which, the housekeeper insists on her going to bed. She resists at first, but when assured that she will be fit for no sight-seeing unless she sleeps, she resigns herself, and is soon fast asleep, and dreaming of Fairfield, the coach, and London shows.

When she awoke the gentlemen were both out; but Mrs. Hicks was commissioned to amuse her, and accordingly took her to see Madame Tussaud's wax-work. In the evening she went with her uncle and Captain Burford to the play, and it is difficult to say whether Captain Burford or his little ward drew down the most scandal on their worthy host. The Captain's laughter was so loud, that it drowned Anna's; but the pair attracted the attention of their neighbours by the unfashionable exuberance of their merriment, and delighted Mr. Barnard beyond expression thereby.

Anna rose the following morning with far different feelings: she was to go to school. Not all her good resolutions would make her like school, she was sure. Her new friend, Mrs. Hicks, who had taken a great fancy to her, and had already begun to spoil her, did her best to comfort her: it was all in vain. She could eat no breakfast, and Uncle Timothy looked compassionately at her through his spectacles.

"You must come and see me, or rather Mrs. Hicks," he said, "every holiday; I dare say Miss Primmerton will allow you."

"Oh! thank you, Uncle Timothy," said Anna, letting fall the tears that she had been trying hard to restrain. "Do you think I may come to-morrow?"

"We shall see," said Uncle Timothy.

"Not if you go there in tears," suggested Captain Burford. "Cheer up, little woman! Why, it was only the other day you said that if you were a man, you would be a sailor. A pretty sailor, indeed!"

Poor Anna tried to smile, but the tears would fall. Uncle Timothy fidgeted, and said he had a patient to see before he could go with his niece to Miss Primmerton's establishment. He went out, and then his carriage came to the door, and Anna's boxes were put into it. Captain Burford told her to remember Midsummer, and to try to learn, and be a good girl; and the more he talked, the more she cried. Uncle Timothy came back with his pockets looking much larger than when he went out. He drew forth a beautiful gilt book, and then a nondescript little ornament, and finally a packet full of sweetmeats; before he had completed these operations, a shopboy came to the door with the most perfect of workboxes; and all these purchases were duly presented to Anna, who felt it absolutely incumbent upon her to dry her tears, and look up at Uncle Timothy. The little girl's bright black eyes, sparkling with tear-drops, met the kind, gentle glance of her relative, and in a moment, for the first time, her arms were round his neck, and her lips on his cheek.

"Bless me! bless me!" said Uncle Timothy in a flurry, adjusting his wig first, and then putting his arm tenderly round her waist.

"She takes one by storm always," said Captain Burford, "even when one ought to scold her. Now, little minx, run away, and dry your tears."

Anna went upstairs.

"I wish she were not so like her father's family," said Uncle Timothy: "that beauty! that beauty! it is a sad temptation."

"The eldest girl is the picture of her mother, and the eldest boy something like you," said Captain Burford. "There never was such a girl as my Jessie. She and my son Nelson are engaged."

"What, already?" said Mr. Barnard, looking surprised.

Anna interrupted the reply. She came in smiling, and, going up to Uncle Timothy, told him that she liked her work-box very much, and would try to like work; that the book was a beautiful story, full of pictures, and that she should take the sweetmeats to school, to give her playfellows.

"But may I leave my book here, to read on holidays?" she added, "because I mean to work at school."

"To be sure," said Uncle Timothy, opening his bookcase and patting her on the head.

They drove to Miss Primmerton's Establishment, situated near Kensington Gardens. They were shown into a handsome drawing-room, and Miss Primmerton soon appeared. She was a short lady, very short; upright, very upright, in person, and doubtless in principles. She had very prominent features, and a thin face; wore spectacles, and carried an eye-glass. Her eyes were large and dark, and whether it was that they projected beyond the eyelids, and so were by nature intended to see more than other eyes, or whether a habit of general observation had given them peculiar power, certain it is that they seemed to look every way at the same time: for instance, although she professed to be talking principally to Mr. Barnard, Captain Burford felt sure that she was addressing him, and Anna could have shrunk into an egg-shell, to avoid the searching side-looks that fell upon her. It need scarcely be said that the head of a first-rate West-end school was gifted with, or had acquired, most perfect manners, only the very lax would have considered them too stiff, and the impertinent too resolutely scholastic. I must add, as one of the supporters of Miss Primmerton's reputation for gentility, that she did not consider herself a schoolmistress, or her house a school; she objected to the title of governess

as applied to herself, and annihilated by a glance everybody who mentioned her as in any way connected with a seminary or establishment. What she did call herself or her household it would be difficult to say; but she wished the whole to be considered as a "family." The young ladies used to give it the title of the "Happy Family," one of them having so named it after a certain caged collection of creatures to be seen near the National Gallery. As the cat always appeared to them the chief of that "happy family," they called Miss Primmerton "Puss;" the head English teacher was honoured by being "the Owl," or "Minerva;" and a good-tempered French woman was "Guinea-pig;" the girls themselves, and one or two under-teachers, bore the various denominations of the rats, mice, small birds, etc., of that united party; and much secret mirth was caused, whenever they could remove themselves from Miss Primmerton's Argus eyes (which was but seldom), by bandying about these different epithets.

"Miss Burton is to be entirely under my charge for four years, as a member of my family, and to be taught whatever I think her capable of acquiring?" said Miss Primmerton.

"Just so," replied Mr. Barnard. "Should it be well for her to assist in your school as a teacher

afterwards, I suppose she would be still treated like your other pupils, as she must, of course, continue to learn as well?"

"Our little circle can scarcely be termed a school; we are a limited number, and quite a family party. My young friends are all equally at home." Miss Primmerton said this with dignity, and terrified her last "young friend" by a side glance from the prominent orbs.

"The deuce is in it," said the Captain gruffly, who had taken an aversion to Miss Primmerton, "if a school isn't a school all the world over. Some are good and some are bad; yours, Ma'am, I hear, is first-rate."

Miss Primmerton, with increased dignity, growing red, and looking quite tall—

"We have great advantages. Bochsa has consented to give instructions on the harp. I have, with immense difficulty, prevailed on Herz to give occasional piano lessons. I have secured Harding for drawing, and Cruvelli for singing. We have a French teacher in the house, so that nothing but French is spoken amongst us; and a first-rate Italian master."

The Captain shrugged his shoulders, and looked at Anna.

"You will astonish the natives when you come

back, child," he said. "I hope, Ma'am, you will teach her geography and the use of the compass, for she has determined upon being a sailor."

Miss Primmerton got up a faint smile, which drew the corner of one side of her mouth upon a level with her nose, whilst the other corner remained stationary.

"I shall be glad to see my niece whenever there is a holiday," said Mr. Barnard, "and will send for her, if she will drop me a line."

"I allow only one afternoon every month; holidays interfere with studies. Friends are requested to be kind enough to call on a Saturday. I rarely permit my young friends to see any one at other uncertain periods; it unfits them for their course of daily duties. I should also mention that I make a point of reading every letter and note that either leaves or enters my house."

Poor Anna! she thought of her diary, of pouring out her heart to Jessie: this was a cruel disappointment to begin with.

"Madam," said the Captain, "do you think her brothers and sister will write anything improper to the child, or she to them? Zounds! that is a hard rule; sailors are better off than that."

"It is mine, Sir. It prevents much mischief, that you may not, perhaps, understand; and there

ought not to be any secrets between young people and a friend placed in my position."

"I think, Captain," said Uncle Timothy, who began to fear a breeze, "that we are detaining Miss Primmerton. When shall I see my little niece, Madam?"

"She can go to you the first Saturday of the ensuing month. If you will excuse my saying so, I consider that it would be better for her not to see you again before that period."

The tears came into Anna's eyes. Captain Burford went to her, and began to condole with her. Uncle Timothy said he hoped she would be a good little girl; then, turning gently to Miss Primmerton, he added, in an under tone aside, "I am sure, Madam, you will be kind to her. She is an orphan, and that is recommendation enough. We shall put implicit faith in you. If she is ill, and if you have no objection, I should be glad to be allowed to attend upon her; and if I can ever be of service to you in a professional way, I shall be very happy. I am thankful to have made my fortune, and therefore seldom need fees, except from those who can well afford it."

Miss Primmerton softened. Real kind feeling soon reaches the heart, and hers was not harder by nature than others, only the formality, that she

considered a duty, hid whatever original warmth she still retained.

"You may depend on me," she said gravely, "and I am much obliged to you for your kind offer. What is your name, my dear?" turning to Anna, and taking her hand.

"Annabella, Ma'am," said the child, looking up through her tears.

"I hope, Annabella, we shall be very good friends," said Miss Primmerton with formal kindness.

"By Jove, you gave that old hag a fee, instead of taking one, doctor," said Captain Burford when he had given Anna her last kiss, and was seated by Uncle Timothy in the carriage. "If you are so fascinating, she will think you have fallen in love with her."

"Oh no! upon my honour, I only—" said the doctor, quite confused. The bare idea of falling in love always upset him.

Captain Burford laughed heartily.

"I can't bear her," he said, when he ceased; "that dear child's spirit will be broken."

The "dear child" was taken to her bedroom by Miss Primmerton, followed thither by her boxes and one of the teachers. There were two neat beds without curtains, two chests of drawers,

two washhand-stands, one horse with four towels thereon; in short, everything requisite for two young ladies.

"You will be required to be very neat; to keep your drawers in order, and to mend your clothes, under the direction of Miss Meek," said Miss Primmerton to Anna.

Miss Meek, the young lady present, looked as though her nature did not belie her name.

"You must rise at six; be particular in your dress and person, and you must be in bed at half-past nine. I allow no noise in your bed-rooms. The young lady who sleeps in this room is very quiet. Miss Meek, will you see that Miss Burton's clothes are arranged, and then bring her to the study?"

Having concluded her ordinary directions, Miss Primmerton left the room. Anna looked at Miss Meek, and, seeing something tearful in the expression of her face, began to cry. Miss Meek seemed much inclined to join her, but, checking herself, asked her to begin to unpack her clothes. Anna gave Miss Meek the key, sobbing out that she could not unlock her box. The box was unlocked, and the chest of drawers was soon filled. Miss Meek brushed Anna's long curls for her, and gave her a kiss, which voluntary act occasioned more tears.

They went down to the study. Miss Primmerton came forward, and, taking Anna by the hand, formally introduced her to some nine or ten girls, of ages varying from twelve to seventeen, who all looked up at her from their books, muttered "How do you do?" and continued to stare at her until Miss Primmerton told them, like Dr. Blimber, "to resume their studies." Miss Primmerton's number was twelve, but the others were with masters. Anna was then examined as to her acquirements, and, being found sadly deficient, was given over to Miss Meek for the present, which pleased her much.

Her attention was soon engrossed by what she considered the wonderful learning of the "family." The unknown tongues they talked, the lessons they learnt, the readings they read, the themes they composed, the drawings they drew, the music they played, cast her into a perfect dream of amazement and terror. How should she ever manage to get through one tithe of such a vast amount of erudition? Her courage, never the mightiest when learning was the enemy to be opposed, sank to zero. When the dinner-hour came, and she laid down the first French lesson-book, in which Miss Meek had been patiently looking, in the flattering notion that Anna was doing the same, she hoped

there might be a respite. No such thing: French was indefatigably spoken by the few who ventured to speak; and Miss Primmerton's eyes were more omnipresent than ever. She felt that they saw every mouthful she ate, and she was afraid of choking beneath their influence. Not that Miss Primmerton addressed her; she was allowed the first day to get into the routine as she best could.

"Miss Colville," or "Mademoiselle Colville," for it was all in French, "how you stoop!" said Miss Primmerton.

Miss Colville drew up.

"My dear Miss Nicholson, pray do not eat in that voracious manner."—"Shall I give you some more beef, Miss Mary?"—"You poke your head like a horse, Miss Grant,"—and so on.

Anna heard one young lady, who sat next her, murmur to another, "Poor Puss!"

"What were you saying, Mademoiselle?"

"Nothing, Ma'am," was the reply.

The dinner was excellent. No young lady could possibly complain at home that she had not enough to eat, or that the viands were ill-served or ill-cooked. Two neat parlour-maids waited, who put Anna into a great fright when they came for her plate, and occasioned Miss Primmerton's eyes to be turned full upon her. The kind French teacher,

who was a married woman, and had a husband and children in her own country, compassionated Anna, and spoke to her once or twice in broken English, but she was too much frightened to reply; and it must have been something very terrible to bridle her tongue. She was so awkward, that Miss Primmerton was panting to speak to her, and when she upset a few drops of water on the cloth, that excellent lady could restrain herself no longer, but said—

"My dear Miss Annabella, you must be careful."

The eleven young ladies looked at Anna, which made her blush scarlet, and one of them said, "*Qu'elle est jolie, la petite!*" which drew from Miss Primmerton the excellent but trite motto, "*La beauté n'est que passagère, mais la bonté dure.*"

Anna knew they were talking of her, and was ready to cry: it was so very hard, she thought, to be in England and yet not understand a word that was spoken.

After dinner Miss Primmerton left them with a teacher for about ten minutes. They did not a appear to be afraid of the teacher, so they gave vent to their long suppressed conversation, some in French, some in English, as the "*Français, Mesdemoiselles!*" of the teacher was unheeded. One delicate-looking, pretty girl came up to the

corner where Anna had ensconced herself, and began to talk to her kindly. Anna's heart was opened at once, and her companion had already learnt how many relatives she had, where she lived, and much more, when Miss Primmerton appeared and caused a dead silence.

Miss Primmerton ordered a walk in Kensington Gardens, and the young ladies obeyed. Anna was fortunate in being consigned to the companionship of Louisa Colville, the pretty girl who had previously spoken to her; but was much disappointed when she found that they were obliged to walk primly, two and two; to attend to their carriage and their toes; requested not to look about them, and to speak little and quietly. How she longed to run and get warm, as she saw some little children doing; and above all, how she sighed for the frozen duck-pond at home, on which she had been used to slide with her brothers! They returned home with cold fingers and red noses, to set to work again. How could she learn that French lesson? she spelt it in English, and could make nothing of it; she did not know what the accents were. Louisa Colville read it over to her a great many times and somehow or other she caught it by ear,—she could not have read one word of it in any other book,—and she said it in fear and trembling, to

Miss Primmerton herself, who praised her, and said in French that she seemed a quick child. Quick she was, but not persevering, as Miss Primmerton, the teachers, and Anna found afterwards, to their cost.

They had tea, at which it was their custom to speak Italian; so the conversation was even less general than at dinner, and Miss Primmerton's eyes more prominent and omnipresent than ever.

"Miss Colville, your nose will be literally in the butter by-and-by," she remarked amongst other things, taking up her eye-glass in addition to her spectacles.

Miss Colville was frequently a victim, because she was rather shy, rather awkward, yet sometimes, when roused, rather pert. Anna looked at her friend.

"I am so near-sighted, Ma'am, and I don't wear spectacles; I wish I did, and an eye-glass," was the reply.

The girls tittered, and Miss Primmerton grew red.

"Miss Colville, you are pert," said Miss Primmerton, growing redder.

"I beg your pardon, Ma'am," said Miss Colville, "I did not intend to be pert, but merely to say that I was near-sighted."

Miss Primmerton was reduced to silence, and they soon returned to their studies. Even the evening was devoted to learning, and, seated round the back drawing-room tables, they read instructive books, and were questioned on what they read, by way of amusement. Miss Primmerton did her duty, and more than her duty: but she said that as hers was a finishing "family," no time was to be lost. The younger girls were not worked quite so hard, but Anna felt sure that she should never get through her share of lessons. They went to bed at half-past eight, and enjoyed half an hour's freedom. Louisa Colville was Anna's fellow-lodger, to her great delight. Miss Primmerton had put them together as a punishment to Miss Colville, who had been the means of inducing another young lady into nocturnal conversations of too lengthy a nature, and was therefore separated from her. She was too anxious to discover Anna's private history, to talk much of the "Family," but she assured her that "Miss Primmerton was a worthy old cat, only she was too much given to prowling, mousing, and scratching, and could see in the dark."

Miss Primmerton came precisely at half-past nine to extinguish the light. Before doing so she flashed the candle across the faces of the two

girls, in order to see whether they were asleep; and having thus concluded the duties of her very hard day, she descended to the study, and regaled herself and principal teachers with something comfortable in the eating and drinking way.

Anna meanwhile had pretended to be asleep, until her companion was asleep, and then she slipped quietly out of bed, knelt down, and prayed God to bless all the dear friends she had left behind her, her Uncle Timothy, and Nelson, far away on the great ocean. She leant her face on the bed, and let her tears melt into it. She asked to be made good, and then again prayed for her dear sister. Oh! she had never known how much she loved her until that sad day,—poor child! perhaps the first day of real trial that she had ever passed—unshared, unsoftened trial. School is, truly, an epitome of the world, the first hard stage in the difficult course of life.

CHAPTER V.

" Though, by a sickly taste betray'd,
Some will dispraise the lovely maid,
With fearless pride I say
That she is healthful, fleet, and strong,
And down the rocks can leap along,
Like rivulets in May.

" And she hath smiles to earth unknown,
Smiles that with motion of their own
Do spread, and sink, and rise;
That come and go with endless play,
And ever, as they pass away,
Are hidden in her eyes."—WORDSWORTH.

" UNCLE Timothy, I did not know that you had a baby," said Anna to her uncle, on that happy "first Saturday of the month," named by Miss Primmerton as the holiday.

" My dear, what do you mean?" said Uncle Timothy, getting very red and looking terrified.

" Oh! that dear little baby that went away when you were out. I wanted to keep it, but the lady said, as she had seen you, she would not stay any longer. Is that your wife, Uncle Timothy?"

" Bless me! bless me! what odd questions!

My dear, the baby is my ward, and the lady is taking care of her. You must ask no more questions about her: if you do not, I will take you to see her next month."

"Very well, Uncle Timothy," said Anna, looking very much as if she would like to ask a great many more questions. "But she is such a sweet baby; lovely dark, dark blue eyes, and hair curling already under her cap, quite brown hair,—and she came to me directly, and laughed, and pulled my hair: you should have seen her laugh! And such a nice lady, Uncle Timothy! is she her mother? Oh! I forgot, I must not ask any questions."

"And how do you like school, and Miss Primmerton, my dear?"

"Not very much, Uncle Timothy. There is so much to learn, and I am so backward, Miss Primmerton says. There is so much to learn! it is all day long reading, and writing, and grammar, and geography, and history, and that hard word about the gods and goddesses that I couldn't read: and another about the moon and stars, and suns; and then music, and French, and drawing,—and that is not half that the big girls have to do. And Sundays we have no more time: there are the sermons to write out, and questions to answer out of

the Bible, and hymns and collects and catechism, and sacred reading; so much more than I used to do with Jessie, and yet I felt better with her, I don't know why."

Uncle Timothy guessed why, but said nothing.

"And how do you like your schoolfellows, my dear?" he asked.

"Very well—some of them. A great many tease me, and laugh at me when I can't learn, and make fun of my old-fashioned frocks; but I don't much care, only I can't bear them when they do it. But I love Louisa Colville, dearly."

"And who is she?" asked Uncle Timothy.

"She sleeps in my room. Her papa and mamma are in India: she showed me where they were on the big map the other day, a great way off, where Nelson is gone. I hope they will know Nelson. Louisa has been with Miss Primmerton ever since she was seven, and now she is past thirteen, and she stays the holidays, which is very dull; only she says Miss Primmerton is not half so strict and cross in the holidays. Louisa is very kind to me, and takes my part, and helps me with my lessons."

"Have you written home?" asked Uncle Timothy.

"Yes," replied Anna with a downcast face. "Oh, such a stiff letter! Miss Primmerton saw

it, and made me alter it, and write it like a copy slip. I am sure Jessie will think me altered. Uncle Timothy, will you give me a sheet of paper, and a pen and ink, and let me write a letter here? There will be no harm in that, you know, because Miss Primmerton only said that she saw all the letters that left her house, but she needn't see those that leave yours?"

Uncle Timothy was half afraid there was a little sophistry in this reasoning, but as he wished the sisters to have unrestrained intercourse, he readily granted Anna's request, and began to prepare the writing materials at once.

Whilst Anna was pouring out her heart, in very bad spelling and worse writing, to her sister, Uncle Timothy was in close conversation with Mrs. Hicks, after which he again went to see patients. When Anna had completed her letter, Mrs. Hicks came to take her for a walk. They went into Bond-street, and Mrs. Hicks conducted her to the private door of a house, on which was inscribed "Madlle. Fourbillon, milliner and dress-maker." They were shown upstairs, and Madlle. Fourbillon was requested to take Anna's measure for two new frocks, with corresponding walking apparel. She was told to make them simple but good; and Mrs. Hicks informed her that the young lady was a niece

of Mr. Timothy Barnard, of Duke-street. Uncle Timothy would certainly have called Madlle. Fourbillon demonstrative. She clasped her hands and exclaimed, "The worthy man! The superior medicine! The distinguished cheerurgeon! He attend me, Meess, and charge me noting."

"The girls will not laugh at my old-fashioned frocks now, or wonder that I have no ornaments," said Anna, when she returned to Duke-street.

"But, my deary," said Uncle Timothy, "you must not be proud of the new ones. Neat clothes are all very well, and I should like you to be properly dressed; but you must remember that it is 'a meek and quiet spirit' that God loves."

"That is what Mamma used to say, and Jessie says sometimes: you are like them, I think, Uncle Timothy. But the girls like fine clothes and grand people. I shall tell them about Mr. Michelson. They wouldn't believe me when I said we ought to have the great house that the Earl of Chatham used to live in."

Uncle Timothy could not help smiling, whilst he shook his head, and murmured to the bookshelf, "The old leaven, alas! Pride of beauty—pride of family—and nothing else. God help you, poor child! man cannot."

Anna looked wistfully into his face.

"I didn't mean to do wrong, Uncle Timothy," she said.

"No, my dear, I am sure of that. But dinner is ready, and we must not forget that you must be home before nine o'clock."

"Not home, Uncle Timothy; at school. This is my London home, and Fairfield is my proper home. School is not like home, though Miss Primmerton says it is."

Anna made such progress in her studies as a child of quick abilities but unstudious nature generally does. She got on rapidly with all that gave her no trouble. She soon learnt to speak French fluently, but shed innumerable tears over the easiest exercises in that language. She picked up more Italian, orally, than many bigger girls, because it entered into her mind, she knew not how. She managed to play pretty tunes by ear, but was ages before she learnt the first scale, or Cramer's first lesson, by note. She read and wrote carelessly, and rarely managed to say a perfect lesson unless Madame, or Louisa Colville taught it to her first. She was alternately teased and spoilt by the girls—scolded and secretly petted by Miss Primmerton—in short, educated in the very way she ought not to have been. Sometimes allowed the free vent of her hot, quick temper—at others

punished for the display of it; instead of being quietly and consistently checked and reasoned with, as Jessie had tried to do.

During her first half-year of school-life she learnt as much, and perhaps more, than most girls of her age; thanks to natural abilities, which, though not wonderful, were good; and thanks, more properly to speak, to Miss Primmerton's undeviating regularity. Her pupils were obliged to learn, grumble as they would,—sick or well, learn they must: and as successive young ladies left her house, *finished*,—to use the approved term,—she had the satisfaction of knowing that they would make their *début* in the fashionable world, with at least a smattering of most things, and above all, with unexceptionable manners, morals, and an upright deportment.

Anna was to spend her summer holidays at home, and her winter ones at her uncle's. In spite of his affirmed dislike to the society of children, Uncle Timothy really liked to have her with him, and by degrees fell into the common failing of spoiling her. She did much as she liked both with him and Mrs. Hicks. Captain Burford came once to London on very particular business, and Uncle Timothy kindly invited them to Duke-street. Anna was allowed to spend a whole Sun-

day with him, which was, perhaps, more kind than wise. Uncle Timothy fairly bolted at the parting scene, and all Louisa Colville's kindness and Miss Primmerton's severity were necessary to keep poor Anna from perpetual floods of tears the next day. Captain Burford carried back wonderful reports of her accomplishments, and of Uncle Timothy's goodness.

She generally saw Mrs. Eveleigh and the baby, who had been christened Sophia, for a short time during her monthly holiday. She liked Mrs. Eveleigh, and quite doted on the baby; and her greatest treat was to be driven by Uncle Timothy to Peckham, and to spend the half-hour allotted, in talking to the one and caressing the other. Mrs. Eveleigh had partly recovered her spirits, and the baby throve amazingly.

The Midsummer holidays came at last, and she was once more with her darling Jessie, Pynsent, Charley, Aunt Betsey, and Captain Burford. Oh, how they flew by, those holidays! She found little alteration at home. Pynsent and Jessie were as steady as ever, and had put the first ten pounds into the bank, towards the paying off of the two thousand pounds mortgage. Jessie had had a beautiful letter from Nelson, and Captain Burford more than one. Peter, her twin brother, was on the seas,

a midshipman. Aunt Betsey was in very low spirits, and read the paper, when she could get one, more than usual—principally the Continental gossip and the marriages; but she only met with Mr. Michelson's name once, and that was in connection with some famous picture at Rome. Michelson Hall was shut up, and Master Chatham was said to be spending his holidays with an aunt in Wales. Jessie's patience was sorely tried by Aunt Betsey's irritability, but her good temper always triumphed.

Several years passed, the events of which, although commonplace enough, were important to the various actors in our little drama. Pynsent finished his apprenticeship to the doctor, and many were the consultations between him, Jessie, Uncle James, and Captain Burford, upon the best means of raising money, to enable him to study in London, and pass the College. Captain Burford proposed writing to Mr. Barnard for advice; but Pynsent at once negatived this, and said that it would look like begging for assistance, which they ought not to do, as their uncle was at such an expense for Anna. He also said that he would rather go to London unknown to his uncle, and try to get on by himself. It might be foolish, but he should like to try at least to become known to a

relation he esteemed, by his own merit, rather than through the mere ties of blood. Captain Burford, not being a man of the world, and having a great notion of young people's roughing it, readily assented to this scheme, as did Mr. Barnard the elder, who helped to raise the necessary funds. It was thought better to keep Anna in the dark respecting Pynsent's movements, for a time at least, as they all knew she would never be able to conceal his being in London from her uncle. So Pynsent went to London with introductions from the gentleman with whom he had served his apprenticeship, and such directions as were necessary from the same quarter. He took a small cheap lodging in the neighbourhood of Guy's Hospital, and was resolved to eschew the gaieties of London as he would the plague, and to devote himself to all manner of hideous skeletons and terrific dissections.

Meanwhile Jessie laboured cheerfully for all. The number of shirts that she cut out, made, or assisted to make, annually was astonishing; and the quantity of work that she got through every day, more surprising still. How she kept house, superintended the making of butter and cheese, directed the farm business, with the assistance of her Uncle James, who had a farm not very far off, and bore with Aunt Betsey's humours, was more praise-

worthy than all the accomplishments under the sun. Not that I wish to disparage accomplishments; but simply to show that young people may be good, amiable, estimable, and lady-like without them, and ought not to be looked down upon by the short-sighted of their sex, who can see no beauties in any one, but through a very peculiar and fashionably shaped eye-glass. Jessie wrote a beautiful hand; was a first-rate accountant; did plain work to perfection; knew how to embroider, but never had time for it; could make puddings and pies, and preserves and jellies, and syllabubs and junkets; understood all about butter making, bread making, cheese making, and cider making; was a capital florist, and knew a good deal practically, and by books, concerning the culture of bees; could rear and feed turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, and pigeons, and had a very superior way of bringing up young calves. Moreover, she could dance country dances and reels well and gracefully, and could make one, if absolutely wanted, in a quadrille; she could sing ballads to perfection without any accompaniment; and as to poetry, I verily believe she could recite almost every piece she had ever read. Her father had collected some very good books of his day, and with these she was well acquainted. The 'Spectator' and 'Rambler' were her

especial favourites, and probably it was from reading these excellent works that she had acquired the power of expressing herself with clearness and even elegance when she wrote. Percy's Reliques and the Elegant Extracts had a peculiar charm for her; and perhaps it was to the old ballads, and her turn for poetry, that she was indebted for the vein of romance that ran almost unsuspected through the fine common sense for which she was remarkable. As Sunday was her only leisure day, she read more books of a religious nature than of any other; and those books, thanks to her father's pure taste, were of the best description. Jeremy Taylor was the writer she loved best, next to the inspired authors of the Bible. She lost herself in his stupendous mind, and found matter for delightful reflection during the week in the sublime poetry in which he clothed his thoughts. Explanations of the Prophecies, and all works that threw a light on the obscure passages of Sacred Writ, were particularly attractive to her; and it was a pleasant thing, of a Sunday evening, to see her seated at a small table near the parlour window, with her mother's large Bible open before her, containing notes and marginal references: on her right hand some old divine, to whom she had been referring, and on her left the ponderous folio of Jeremy Taylor's

sermons. Aunt Betsey, with her Prayer-book open near her, might be dozing in the armchair. Charley, with his elbows on the table, and his head resting on his hands, might be gazing entranced on one of the pictures in the large family Bible, which, being illustrated from paintings of the old Masters, had been his Sunday evening companion almost from infancy; and the tabby cat might be purring on the cushioned window-seat.

Such was the family picture on the evening of the Sunday on which Charley had completed his fourteenth, and entered on his fifteenth year. Captain Burford had presented him with a beautiful paint-box, which was conspicuously placed on a side table; and his Uncle James had given him the Farmer's Calendar, the plates of which he admired more than the chapters.

"Jessie, can you talk to me a little?" said the boy.

Jessie was deep in one of the prophecies of Isaiah, but she said "Yes, dear," cheerfully, and looked up from her book.

"Do you know there is an artist in the town, who takes likenesses and gives lessons in drawing?" said Charley.

"Really!" exclaimed Jessie; "how I wish you could have some lessons!"

She had said at once what Charley had been longing to say for days.

"Have you seen him, Charley? and how does he paint? and where does he live?"

"He is staying at the Inn. I saw some of his likenesses in the window yesterday, and one that he had taken of the innkeeper was very like. Oh! there is Captain Burford!"

The Captain's head was suddenly poked in at the window, and Jessie and Charley both flew to open the door. As Aunt Betsey did not awake, Jessie proposed going into the arbour; but Captain Burford said he had left an acquaintance round the corner, who would not come to the house until he had obtained permission from its inmates.

"Any friend of yours, you know, Captain Burford—" said Jessie.

The Captain disappeared, but soon returned, accompanied by a stranger. This was the identical artist.

"Jessie, this is Mr. Snagrell, a first-rate artist," said Captain Burford. "Mr. Snagrell, this is Miss Burton and the little boy I was talking to you about, who is such a clever drawer."

The young man bowed, and said—

"You mistake, Sair, my name is Sangarelli. I am one Italian."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Snagrelli," said the Captain. "Charley, run and fetch your drawing book; I want to show Mr. Snagrell your drawings."

Charley looked modest: the Italian begged him to comply with the *Capitano's* request, and Charley obeyed. He soon returned with the best of his drawings, which were placed upon the rustic table of the arbour.

The first that Signor Sangarelli took up was a sketch of cattle, evidently from nature, as it was rough in outline, hastily done, and little shaded. He was surprised, but made no remark. The next was a picture of Fairfield, not so clever; correct, but laboured in the shading. This was coloured with bad paint, and there was an evident want of knowledge of the combination of colour: still the lights and shadows were carefully studied. The next was Charley's favourite subject, a sketch of Jessie. Could the one that Nelson had taken away with him have been compared with this, a vast improvement would have been visible. The expression was caught, and the few finishing touches were more artistic. Signor Sangarelli looked at it and at Jessie alternately, till Jessie felt her cheeks growing red.

"Vera good," he said at last.

The various sketches of cattle and rural scenery were decidedly the best, and Signor Sangarelli said that they all showed great talent, that ought to be cultivated. Jessie fixed her truthful eyes upon the face of the speaker, and saw that he meant what he said. It may be remarked here that Jessie's eyes were of that rare kind in which you seemed to read the word "Truth" at a glance; and daring, indeed, must have been that individual who could have uttered a falsehood whilst looking into them.

How Charley's pale face flushed, and how his heart beat, whilst he listened to the artist's praises of his early efforts! How well he knew that the remarks he made were for the most part just; and how certain he felt that, with instruction, study, and time, he might rival those great men of whom he had read!

"What are your charges for instruction?" asked Captain Burford.

"Five shillings a lesson," was the reply.

Charley's heart sank; Jessie looked grave, and Captain Burford shook his head.

"I am afraid that is more than we can afford," said Jessie in her straightforward way, "although we should like my brother to have a few lessons: but we will think it over tomorrow, and let you

know. Sunday is not quite the day for these matters."

"You are right, my dear," said Captain Burford; "I hope Nelson will always be led by you."

"Oh! I will say half-a-crown a lesson to a brother artist," said Signor Sangarelli eagerly. "I shall not be in these parts long, so I will come tomorrow, and twice more in the week."

Jessie thought this a summary mode of proceeding, but did not object, and the matter was settled.

The following morning saw Charley taking his first lesson. They were all well pleased with the artist, as he understood enough of the rules of art to give Charley many valuable hints. He was also clever enough to discover surprising talent in his pupil, who would very soon have surpassed his master. Charley had sixteen lessons,—all that Jessie could afford to give him. But these were great helps to him in his after self-education; and the praise he received from Signor Sangarelli encouraged him to proceed in his endeavours after excellence. But, unfortunately, he had no one but Jessie to whom he could confide his yearning to study painting as a profession; and she having heard of the difficulties attending such a course, scarcely dared to bid him hope for the accomplishment of his desires.

CHAPTER VI.

"'Twas hard from those I loved to go,
Who knelt around my bed,
Whose tears bedew'd my burning brow,
Whose arms upheld my head.

"As fading from my dizzy view,
I sought their forms in vain,
The bitterness of death I knew,
And groan'd to live again."—HEBER.

"IF there is no means of my being made an artist, Jessie, I will be a farmer," said Charley one day to his sister, during an anxious conversation that they were having on his future prospects. "Next to painting, I love the country; and I could help you best by learning regularly to farm. Besides, I could still study my art, and might make something of myself by-and-by."

"I am afraid, my dear boy, that you must strive to be either one thing or the other. We have not the means, and do not know how to let you regularly study painting; so if farming is your next inclination, you had better take Uncle James's offer, and go to him for a few years. His is such

an immense farm, that you would learn more there in a month than you could learn here in a twelvemonth."

"Time will prove, Jessie," said Charley sadly, "but the sooner I begin something the better."

Jessie looked fondly into her youngest and dearest brother's face. It was not a very handsome, but it was a most intellectual countenance. Deep-set grey eyes, with eyebrows that threatened to be rather bushy, gleamed from beneath a broad forehead. There was already a slight contraction between the eyebrows, which, to judge from his pale thin cheeks, you would have fancied the fruit of suffering; and the compression of the mouth you would have attributed to the same cause. But Charles, although always a delicate boy, had never endured much bodily pain. The quickness of eye, the working nostril, the thoughtful brows, the mouth with its expression of character, denoted the early struggles of mind; and the tall thin figure bespoke the youth of nineteen rather than of fifteen years old.

Captain Burford and Jessie had both come to the conclusion that if he followed the bent of his inclination, he would soon kill himself by study; and they fancied that to save his life, it should be made as active as possible. They had, moreover,

no means whatever of forwarding his plan of becoming an artist by profession, and did not even know the way to set about it. They considered that he could not do a better thing for his health and strength than accept Mr. James Barnard's offer of going to him to study practical farming; and accordingly to his uncle he went.

This uncle was, like his brother Timothy, a bachelor, and a decided oddity. In his youth he had been very much smitten by Miss Betsey Burton and her beauty, and having been contemptuously refused by that lady, he had eschewed the society of females, given himself up to farming and hunting, his dogs, and a few old friends. He did not often visit Fairfield, because he had never wholly healed the wound Cupid had inflicted, and the sight of Miss Betsey, albeit not so lovely as in former days, always affected him strangely. His favourite amongst the children was Peter, and he would have adopted him, had that very self-willed youth been agreeable. But as he declared that he would be a sailor, and would not go and live at "The Grange," his uncle told him to "go about his business, and Charley should come to him."

Mr. James Barnard was a tall, large, burly, bronzed, and genuinely honest yeoman; a fine specimen of the English farmer. He had a rough

exterior, a rough manner, a rough hand when he slapped his nephew Charles on the back, and anything but a rough heart. He was possessed of property, both funded and landed. The Grange, where he resided, was his own; and he rented, besides, Mr. Michelson's largest farm. There was very little poverty in his immediate neighbourhood, for he kept all the poor, who chose to work, employed, and paid them regularly. His land was as rich and fertile as any in Somersetshire, that very rich and fertile county; and his fields sloped smoothly down to the river Parrott, and looked across at the famous little Isle of Athelney, where King Alfred let the immortal cakes burn. His abode was a large, rambling farmhouse, and his style of living was profuse to extravagance. Bread and cheese, and cider, milk, cream, butter and bacon, must have almost learnt to walk into the mouths of the various grades of visitors and beggars that assailed the door; and as to the huge hall table, it was never unspread. "Cut and come again" was the motto Mr. Barnard had had inscribed on the large wooden platter which usually held the brown bread, and truly his guests did not refuse the invitation. All his eatables and drinkables were produced from his own land, and he never grudged them, scarcely indeed knew how much was con-

sumed in his house. All he knew was, that as soon as one batch of bread, fine rich cheese, or gammon of bacon was gone, there were plenty more to be had, and he never stopped to inquire who had eaten the one, or was likely to devour the other. Every Christmas a big hamper of good cheer was despatched to his brother Timothy in London, accompanied by a letter inviting him to the Grange, which was duly acknowledged by the celebrated surgeon, and the letter as duly replied to. Brother Timothy always promised to visit his native place as soon as his numerous professional engagements would permit him; but never since he had set himself up as a surgeon in London had he fulfilled his promise. Mr. Barnard had a kind of feeling that his brother had become too grand for him; but he possessed too much honest pride to allow such a feeling to be displayed openly. It had however prevented his taking either Anna or his favourite Peter to London.

"Charley! Charley!" hallooed Mr. Barnard one day, two or three months after his nephew had taken up his abode with him. He stood in the middle of a large meadow, and his voice was that of a Stentor. "Charley! hollo there! Charley, I say! Where the deuce is the lad? My pony too! I'll see how I'll let him ride again!"

Mr. Barnard strode through the meadow, hallooing at intervals, crossed a gate, and got into a ploughed field; walked over the furrows as if they were turnpike roads, and reached a smaller field by the river, fringed with alders and willows. He paused to call "Charley!" once more, and was answered by a faint, "Coming, Uncle, coming!"

Down by the river's brink was Charley, astride the pony, with a large book in his hand, that his uncle perceived was the 'Farmer's Calendar,' and gloried therein. He went on however, and saw that his favourite pony was almost knee-deep in mud and water, and that he was quietly cropping the rich grass by the river. Charley's feet just touched the water, and he did not appear to have the least intention of moving away. Before him the cattle were standing in the calm river, and by his side the willows were arching and forming themselves into all sorts of picturesque shapes, reflected in the water. The setting sun was casting his farewell rays of gold over the scene, and some large water-lilies were expanding their white leaves beneath his beams. The birds were twittering sleepy good-nights to each other, and the cows looked too lazy to move away from the shallow part of the stream into which they had walked. One old bull in particular had fairly fallen asleep, and was literally "standing for his picture."

"What the dickens are you about, Sir?" shouted Mr. Barnard, drawing near.

"Only a minute, Uncle: directly, Uncle. Do not disturb the bull!"

Mr. Barnard now stood by his nephew's side, and saw, to his great disgust, the fly-leaf of the handsome book he had given him, covered with pencil-marks. He was about to protest against such sacrilege, when he caught sight of the sketch Charles was making. There was his famous bull, as like as mere pencilling could make him. The large head and sleepy face were sketched to perfection, and the rest of him, though carelessly done, was unmistakably "he himself he." A rough outline of some of the other cattle, the willows, sloping field, water-lilies, and a few large stones, completed a hasty but clever sketch, which even Mr. Barnard, little as he knew of art, was struck with.

"And that's how you study the 'Farmer's Calendar,' is it, Sir?" began Mr. Barnard, as soon as the last stroke was put into the bull's head. "Dang my buttons, if ever I give you another farming book! Jerry up to his knees in water, besides, taking cold! Your feet as wet as they can be! My supper waiting, and the potatoes getting cold! I frightened out of my life, and all the people in full hue and cry after you! 'Twas only

the other day that I found you making a picture in the middle of the hayfield, and half the haymakers looking over your shoulder! The very handles of the ploughs have got cows and dogs upon 'em, and you pretending to learn farmering! I can't put down a bit of a bill, or a letter, or a book, but when I take it up again I must needs see it ornamented either with my own big face, or Polly's, or one of the hounds! If that's the way you mean to go on, a fig for your farming, say I!"

"Indeed, Uncle, I could not resist—" began Charles.

"It's all fudge, Sir: just go and drive them cattle out of the water into Little Mallow Mead, and then come home to supper."

Charles obeyed, and his uncle strode homewards, fussing and fuming to himself. Charles overtook him, and said—

"Indeed, Uncle, I will give up sketching altogether; that will be the only way. I will make a temperance vow."

"The deuce a bit!" said his uncle. "Besides, I want a pictur of that bull in colours, to hang up in the parlour; and if you'll do me a big one the same as the little sketch you took this evening, I'll give you a holiday."

"My dear Uncle!" said Charles, brightening

up, "that I will. He will make a splendid picture."

"I know I ought not to let you do it," said Mr. Barnard thoughtfully, scratching his head. "You'll be neither one thing nor t'other. Haw! haw! haw! A farmer sitting down in the middle of his harvest to make a drawing of his waggon and horses, or stopping in the middle of his ride round his farm to sketch a flock of sheep, or walking into the river to catch, as you painters call it, the sun upon the water! Haw! haw! haw! Oh, Charley, my boy, that won't do. You must catch something a deal more lively than that."

"Well, Uncle, as soon as ever I have finished the bull, I will give it up, and take to studying farming, and nothing else."

"There's a hearty!" said Mr. Barnard, inflicting such a slap on his nephew's back as he dismounted from his pony at the door of the house as almost prostrated him. "A nice fellow, you, to shove a waggon up-hill! Haw! haw! haw!"

Charles worked day and night until he had completed a very large coloured sketch of the river scene, in which the bull was the prominent feature. It was wonderfully clever for an almost self-taught youth; but then it was coloured from nature; and an artist, gifted with genius such as

Charles possessed, is sure to do pretty well if he trust wholly to her guidance. He stood in the water and out of the water, wherever the bull and cows chanced to be when he wanted them, until he had finished his picture; and being quite absorbed in his art, forgot the sun, the rain, the dews, and wet feet. The consequence was, that he completed a painting that did not disgrace the splendid gilt frame ordered for it, and caught such a cold that it brought on a fever.

Poor fellow! he is now lying on a bed of suffering, and his uncle is watching impatiently by his bedside. The gig has just been despatched for Jessie, and a man and horse for the doctor. Whilst he slumbers uneasily, Mr. Barnard reproaches himself as the cause of the cold and fever. He gets up and walks about the room; his heavy footstep awakes Charles. He sits down again in a great passion with himself.

"Is Jessie come?" muttered Charles.

"Not quite," replied his uncle in a whisper; "she'll be here directly. There, lie still now. Is the pain so very bad? Zounds! why don't that fool of a doctor come! 'Tis always the case; they are never to be found when you send for them, though in any sudden accident there's sure to be three or four at hand. I wish Timothy was here."

Wheels were heard, and Mr. Barnard hurried downstairs.

"What is the matter?" asked Jessie, meeting him in the passage.

"Charley is terribly ill; go up to him straight," said her uncle. "Who the dickens have we here? Pynsent! where on earth did you come from?"

The latter part of the sentence was addressed to a young man who followed Jessie, and who was Mr. Pynsent Burton, surgeon.

"I came down last night, Uncle," said Pynsent, returning his uncle's hearty shake of the hand. "I can attend to Charley, and therefore stopped the boy who was going for Mr. Martin; that is to say, I sent him to the druggist's instead, and we shall soon have the necessary remedies."

"Odds bobs!" said Mr. Barnard, "and who's to trust to such a young chap as you? 'Twas only the other day I nursed you; and you talking of doctoring your brother! But go your ways, and see what's to be done for Charley. If all aint right, I shall send for Doctor Martin, mind you; so you needn't take offence." Pynsent left the room. "I baint a going to have a boy's life sacrificed for the pleasure of seeing what such a sprig as that can do—only just out of the egg, half-fledged, and yet quite cock-a-hoop. Oh the vanity

of this young generation! I know what I'll do; and then I shan't offend the lad, for I saw some of his poor mother's early spirit in him, when I called him a young chap. I know what I will do. I'll write to Timothy as things go on, and get his advice."

With this resolution, Mr. Barnard opened a bureau that stood in the large hall, took up a sheet of foolscap paper and spread it upon the desk, sat down, and began, "Dear Brother." He considered a long time, and finally closed the bureau, and went upstairs to see what Pynsent was about.

Mr. Barnard went downstairs, and wrote precisely what he thought of Charley and Pynsent on the sheet of foolscap. By the time he had done this the boy arrived. He went upstairs again, and found Pynsent in another room, preparing a draught. By dint of questioning, he found out its principal ingredients, hurried to the bureau, and wrote them down. He continued to pursue this course until the last moment before it was necessary to send the letter to the post, when he signed, sealed, directed, and despatched the foolscap, and prepared another sheet.

In a few days poor Charley's fever assumed a decidedly typhoid form, to use a medical term. All the remedies employed by Pynsent could not

keep it down. Day and night he and Jessie watched and tended this dear brother, only to see him grow daily, nay hourly, worse and worse. Mr. Barnard was so distressed that he made matters worse by continual fretting and fuming. His only comfort seemed in his bureau, and when Jessie and Pynsent had time to wonder at anything, they wondered to see him constantly writing, and to learn that a letter arrived almost daily, hitherto a rare event in his life. His brother replied to his first letter by return of post: he said that nothing could be better than the measures resorted to by his nephew. As Charley got worse, Mr. Martin came to see him, and to consult with Pynsent; but there was nothing more to be done than Pynsent had done.

About the twelfth day Charley's life was despaired of: typhus in its worst form had come on, and was accompanied by constant delirium. Jessie and Pynsent were well-nigh spent, and as to Mr. Barnard, although of little use in the sick-room, he could scarcely be prevailed upon to absent himself from it, or to take any rest.

As Jessie sat alone one night by Charley's bed, she gave way to an unusual burst of grief. She suddenly thought of her mother's parting words, "Take care of little Charley." And that beloved

object of the mother's last earthly care, that youngest born, was about, perhaps, to join her in another world, and to leave Jessie for ever! The only one from whom she had never been separated, even for a day, the patient, gentle brother. Jessie fell on her knees, and poured out her sorrow at the footstool of her God. Grief and prayer were no new things to her. Young as she still was, she had seen both her parents die, and had received from them their last commands and last blessings. Was she now to hear the final sigh of that beloved brother? She suppressed the rising sob as she prayed for him, "Give him back to us, O my God, for his Saviour's sake! Yet not my will, but thine be done." These words recalled her natural composure. Whatever the Almighty willed was right. If it was His pleasure to take her brother from this beautiful world to one more lovely, where pain and grief were not, and all was peace and happiness, it would be, doubtless, for the best; he would be removed before much of evil or human suffering had ruffled the serenity of his nature; and, after a brief space of existence, she might, with God's grace, follow him, and dwell with him for ever. But oh that he might know her before he passed away! Oh that those delirious wanderings, fanciful and touching as they were, might

cease, and that he might be recalled to think of his Saviour before the last dread hour!

Out of the darkness and silence arose his voice, even whilst she prayed. His mind strayed amongst green fields, woods, waters, hills, and ruins. The scenes and events of an innocent childhood were present to him, and he gathered sweet violets for his mother and Jessie, or strung the rich cowslips into balls for play. Again he was sketching beautiful landscapes, or innumerable successions of herds of cattle, that would not stand still for him; or striving after some grand ideal conception, of which he had formed but a slight fancy in health, but which now rose before him with all the grandeur of reality. Again he repeated long pieces of poetry, which must have faded from his memory in its natural state, and hymns that Jessie had taught him years ago. But, best of all, he went through our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, which he had learnt on Sunday evenings for Jessie; and then seemed to have the family Bible before him, and to be murmuring of the old pictures and gazing upon them. It was a consolation to Jessie's fond heart to feel that none but peaceful, happy memories thronged through his bewildered mind, and that he did not appear conscious of the burning fever that was consuming him.

Pynsent came, and entreated his sister to lie down for a few hours. She consented, upon his promising to call her if any change took place. When she left the room, she sent in one of the servants to watch with Pynsent. It was with difficulty that this woman could restrain her wailings, but Pynsent insisted upon silence, and she did her best to obey. He was stoical and firm by nature; but at the root there lay feelings of the deepest kind, and that root was almost laid bare when he listened to his brother.

On the fifteenth day they all stood around the bed,—Jessie, Pynsent, and Mr. Barnard, with the addition of Captain Burford and Mr. Martin. They were all breathlessly awaiting his death. The face was almost black; the throat refused to swallow the teaspoonful of wine that had kept life hitherto in the body; the pulse was so rapid that it could no longer be counted; the delirium had ceased, and a stupor had taken its place; all that could be done had been done—in vain; both doctors said he must die; nothing earthly could save him; the crisis was past, he was sinking rapidly.

Jessie laid a cloth soaked in vinegar and water over his temples; wetted his parched, blackened lips with wine and water: he opened his eyes—he

looked at her, he knew her—she was convinced he knew her. She nearly fainted. God only knew how ill and exhausted she felt, but with a supernatural effort she recovered herself. "With God all things are possible," she thought.

All that long, weary night, and the greater part of the following day, he lingered on the verge of the grave. How exhausted nature sustained herself, it was impossible to say; but the torch of life still flickered faintly—oh, how faintly! A small portion of liquid seemed to enter the throat; it nearly choked him, but it passed down. They tried more, almost drop by drop it followed. Oh, the anxious agony of that next hour!

And then he slept. "Oh, merciful Father in heaven, look down and bless his slumbers!" prayed his fainting, hoping sister. He slept,—yes, it was sleep, and not stupor; breathing, and not panting. Jessie, who had been watching for the death-hour, was too excited to watch that sleep. She went out into the night. The moon and one star were looking calmly down upon the rambling farm-house, unconscious of the scene of anxious misery within. That star! it was her mother, she was sure; her mother watching over her child: he would not die. She wandered into the fields. How calmly the gentle sheep slept beneath the skies! no trouble

for life, no anguished presentiment of death. That star, how brightly it shone! Jessie knelt down beneath it, upon the dewy grass: in the heart of sleeping nature, animate and inanimate, she knelt and prayed—to the star, to her mother in heaven, to her fathers in heaven, to him who was once with her, and to Him who was always with her. She supplicated for her brother's life. She had lost her resignation; if he died, she must die also.

She pressed her hands upon her forehead; it was so hot it frightened her. She hurried back to the house—to the room; all was hushed as the grave. Pynsent watched alone. He put his finger to his lips, and moved towards her: "The pulse has lessened—there is hope," he murmured. She went into the next room; Captain Burford and Mr. Martin were there. She looked wild, and spoke wildly; she flung herself into her guardian's arms.

"Martin, come here, for God's sake!" exclaimed Captain Burford. "Feel her; how burning she is!"

"She has taken the infection," said Mr. Martin.

God help them, those two poor men, the guardian and the uncle! It was pitiful to see them weep. Yes, Jessie had caught the fever. It had

been for days raging in her veins, and now it was at its height. The servants, who loved her to distraction, got her into bed. They would not tell Pynsent that night, so Mr. Martin prescribed.

Mr. Barnard sat down to the bureau. He wrote at the end of the foolscap sheet as follows:—"Half-past one, A.M. Jessie has the fever,—the stay of the family, the hope and comfort of us all: if she dies, they are ruined. For the love you have as a brother, come to us. I have asked you often, when I could give you pleasure,—you have never come; will you come now that we are miserable? I feel sure that you would save her. Oh, come at once, for God's sake!"

With a trembling hand the large, burly man sealed that letter: he had scarcely power to do it. It was four days before an answer could arrive, and she might be dead before then.

Jessie's fever was not, however, so alarming as Charley's; still she was delirious, and her life despaired of. When Charley was pronounced out of danger, she had no understanding left to enable her to praise the Lord for His mercies; she was raving of her mother in heaven.

At the close of the third day a postchaise drove up to the door. The posters were nearly exhausted. Mr. Barnard rushed from his bureau to the door.

He would not have known that rather elderly gentleman under any other circumstances, but now his heart told him it was his brother. He opened his large arms, and folded him in an embrace that, at any other time, would have disconcerted him.

"Brother, this is kind," he said. "Welcome home!"

"How do you do, James? God bless you!" said Mr. Timothy, as soon as he was freed from the embrace.

"Now for those poor children: let me see them."

"They don't know of your coming," said Mr. Barnard.

"Never mind, there is no time to lose."

Mr. Barnard led the way upstairs. He called Pynsent out of Jessie's room.

"Pynsent, this is my brother Timothy, come to see Jessie and Charley," he said.

Pynsent started, and the colour rushed to his face;—the uncle he had so longed yet half-feared to know, whose reputation as a surgeon was so high.

Uncle Timothy shook hands with him, and with professional tact and feeling said—

"I am come to help you, not to supplant you: your treatment of your patients has been admirable."

Pynsent wondered how he could know that.

"Will you take me to them? If they are conscious, they had better look on me as a stranger; if not, it does not matter."

They went to Charley's room. He was asleep; his face was deadly pale, but had lost some of the fearful black hue that had overspread it. Uncle Timothy felt his pulse.

"All right here," he said; "nothing but nourishment wanted: what do you think?"

"We have been pouring wine and porter down his throat, and everything that he can swallow that has strength in it," said Pynsent.

"Good!" said his uncle.

They proceeded to Jessie. The first words that greeted them were—

"I have tried to do my duty by them, Mamma. I could not help Charley's dying: it was God's will. I see you, Mamma; I am coming to you." And then a sweet but excited voice began to sing a hymn.

Uncle Timothy shook his head. He sat down by the bedside and looked awhile at Jessie. She tried to sit up in bed, but fell back again. A tear started to his eye. He put his hand upon her pulse, and she looked at him. He had been always reckoned very like his sister, and some slight per-

ception evidently crossed her disordered brain. She seized his hand and held it fast; then, smiling, again talked to her mother, as if she was quite near her.

The fever in her cheeks and eyes had given a surpassing brilliancy to her appearance, for she had not reached the worst stage of the disease. Uncle Timothy smoothed her pillow, kissed her cheek, and having beckoned to a servant to take his place, left her.

Then he and Pynsent consulted together, or rather he consulted with Pynsent on what he had done and meant to pursue.

"Very good," said Mr. Barnard approvingly: "and now let me feel your pulse."

Pynsent smiled, and gave his hand.

"You are not well," said his uncle gravely; "and these are things not to be trifled with. I shall insist on your going instantly to bed. By timely remedies you may be spared this fever; without them, you will surely have it."

Pynsent felt his own pulse, and knew that his uncle spoke the truth. Mr. Martin arrived, and confirmed it. They told Mr. Barnard that Pynsent was knocked up by long watching, and that he must have a quiet night somewhere. Mr. Barnard had caused his own room to be put ready

for his brother Timothy, and intended sleeping himself on the sofa in the parlour. Uncle Timothy said that he could sleep anywhere, so Pynsent was ordered to this room, despite his protestations to the contrary.

CHAPTER VII.

"Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
'Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge.
How little do we know that which we are!
How less what we may be! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
Our bubbles: as the old burst, new emerge,
Lash'd from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of empires heave but like some passing waves."

BYRON.

THE sickness at the Grange awoke a feeling of commiseration and sympathy throughout the whole neighbourhood. Even persons who knew little or nothing of the young people who were thus stricken were constant in their inquiries. It is unnecessary to state that Captain Burford paid daily visits, and that the illness of Jessie was a source of the deepest anxiety and distress to him. It was almost impossible to keep him from her room, or to prevail on him to return home at night, although he knew that there was no bed for him at the Grange and that he was only in the way. His grief was heightened by a letter he had received from his

son, stating that his health had suffered so much from the climate of India, and from the hard service on which he had been engaged, that, unless he grew much and speedily better, he should return home in a few months on sick leave. The letter also contained the intelligence of his having obtained his lieutenancy, and having been promoted to the Interpretership of his regiment. He had always been chary of speaking or writing much about himself, but the Indian journals had from time to time reported favourably of him, and his father knew enough of the Oriental languages to be convinced that he must have studied very hard before he could have been linguist enough to be made interpreter.

Amongst the most anxious and kind of the various inquirers was Mr. Michelson. It so chanced that there was a general election, and Mr. Michelson had determined upon standing for the county. Any kind of excitement was life to him, and he began to tire of the finest pictures and statues, nay even of the handsomest women, and to pine for novelty. An election was the very thing to suit him, and he returned from abroad to see what was to be done. He was conscious of having lived so seldom amongst his neighbours and tenantry as to be little known or cared for by them. With some

of the tact belonging to himself peculiarly, and much of that common to all electioneerers, he set about achieving popularity. It matters not much to us how he got on generally, but as regards our own particular friends and acquaintances it does matter somewhat. Oh, the grapes, peaches, nectarines, bottles of old wine, best Guiness's porter, and baskets of flowers that appeared at the Grange, brought from Michelson Hall, was a sight to be seen! How many of these presents were due to his former admiration of Miss Burton, and how many to the election, is not for me to determine. Farmer Barnard was a Tory of the old school; Captain Burford a Whig of the old school; Pynsent rather inclined to Whiggism of a newer school, in spite of the red-hot Toryism of all his family, Aunt Betsey inclusive. Mr. Michelson did not care much what he was, provided he was returned as one of the members for Somerset. He called himself a Conservative, a name then beginning to be fashionable, as the best means of uniting Whig and Tory interest. Now, a great many grapes and bottles of old wine and delicate attentions were necessary to amalgamate all those family political differences of opinion into votes for a Conservative member, especially when, on account of the fever, he could not canvass in person.

He had plenty of time before him, however, as the election was not to take place for some months, and he had a most efficient aid in his very handsome dashing son, a young cavalry officer of charming manners.

His presents were received at the Grange with every feeling and expression of gratitude; and most welcome and beneficial they were, to Charley especially, who was out of danger, but still prostrated from extreme weakness. Charley might, perhaps, have gained more strength had his mind been at rest; but he had managed to find out, in spite of all kinds of subterfuges, that Jessie had the fever, and he was possessed with the notion that she would die, and that he would not be able to see her. But it pleased God that Jessie should not die, neither was she reduced to the same extreme weakness that had resulted from the fever in Charley's case. When the crisis was past, and the delirium had left her, she was able to question those about her concerning her brothers. The first person she appealed to was her unknown uncle. She thought she should be able to bear to hear the worst better from a stranger than from one of her own friends.

"Your brother Charles is better, my dear," said her uncle, "and there is every prospect of his recovery."

Jessie clasped her thin white hands, and raised her eyes to heaven. Her uncle inwardly joined her in her mute thanksgiving. He saw that she had not strength to question him further, so he said, after a time—

"Pynsent is not in danger; his illness proceeded as much from anxiety as fever. He has not lost his senses at all, and though taken down the last, will probably be well first."

Again Jessie inwardly thanked God, and a flood of tears relieved her.

"Now, my dear," said her uncle, "drink this, and sleep."

She swallowed a composing draught, and turned away. Large, full tears rolled from her eyes, until, like an infant, she silently wept herself to sleep.

"Poor child! poor child!" said Uncle Timothy, "you have too much upon your young mind, I am sure."

Strange that Uncle Timothy should have been the first person to discover this fact. Everybody else believed Jessie equal to anything, and she had been so used to do more than she was equal to, that nobody thought it at all remarkable that from the age of fifteen to three or four and twenty she should have been at work, head, heart, and limbs, from morning to night.

When Jessie awoke from her long and refreshing sleep, she found the strange doctor again by her bedside. She thought it odd that he should be sitting so quietly at the little round table, reading by the dim rushlight, and that everybody else should have left her. She moved as well as her weakness would let her, that she might look at him. What a quiet, serene face he had, and how earnestly he was reading! She gradually recalled some of the wandering fancies she had been possessed with in the fever, and dimly remembered that she had imagined herself tended by her mother; that mother's face was before her, and in some way it connected itself with that of her silent companion. Possibilities and impossibilities presented themselves to her mind. She made a movement to attract the attention of the reader; he was up, and feeling her pulse in a moment.

"Better," he said, with a smile, and sat down on the bed.

"Are you my uncle Timothy?" asked Jessie, looking at him very earnestly.

"Yes, my dear," said he, quite thrown off his guard by so unexpected a question.

"I thought so," said Jessie, "you are so like Mamma!" and she burst into tears.

"My dear, my dear," said Uncle Timothy,

"you must not give way. What an old fool I am!"

He bent over her and kissed her cheek. She put her arms gently round his neck, as if he had indeed been her mother; and he inwardly asked Him to whom he was used to appeal in all moments of peculiar hope or fear, to teach him how best to become both father and mother to the orphan girl, whom sickness had already strangely endeared to him. Jessie was much excited. Uncle Timothy again sat down by the little table.

"Do you love this book, my dear? It is the Holy Bible. I think you do, from much I have heard you say when you did not know what you were saying."

Jessie smiled, and murmured "Yes."

"Then I will read to you."

Uncle Timothy had been reading the Psalms. He was very fond of that portion of Sacred Writ; and to many a poor sufferer before Jessie had he begun with the verse "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me." He read well, and with feeling. Jessie's tears flowed more quietly, and at last they ceased. She clasped her hands and prayed with the Psalmist.

Whilst they were thus engaged, Mr. Barnard entered; he paused a moment, and then sat down by his brother. He was not a pious man, though a worthy and a kind-hearted one, and had been accustomed to laugh at his sister as a saint; but the visitation in his household had made him ask, "Does affliction come from the ground?" and had checked several improper expressions and bursts of passion to which he was accustomed thoughtlessly to give way. He now listened, almost for the first time in his life, to the Bible, as if he were himself a party concerned; and the words of the king of Israel entered into his heart, as they have, by God's grace, entered into the hearts of thousands, for good.

When Uncle Timothy saw that Jessie was calm, and thought he had read enough, he took a little black book out of his pocket, and asked her whether they should unite in thanking God for His late mercies vouchsafed unto them. She assented, and he knelt down. Mr. Barnard did the same. For the first time since their infancy the brothers knelt together, and together offered up the same words of thanksgiving. Short and simple was the prayer read by Mr. Timothy Barnard, thanking God for the recovery of the grievously sick and afflicted, and emphatically did he pronounce the words.

When he concluded with our Lord's Prayer, Jessie's weak voice joined, and Mr. Barnard's powerful bass also fell in. If prayer and thanksgiving be heard in Heaven, assuredly those words have entered there, and "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" is with the three earthly worshipers, to assist, encourage, and strengthen for "the race set before them."

Long before the three invalids were recovered, their good and kind Uncle Timothy was obliged to leave them. He had the satisfaction of seeing them together, however, before he did so. He directed the preparations in the largest and most airy of the bed-rooms for their reception, and assisted in transporting them thither.

Who shall describe the meeting of the brothers and sister? The tears, the smiles, the inward thanksgivings—they who had not expected to meet again in this world!

It was when all gradually became composed, that Uncle Timothy was first introduced to Charley, and that he also named the period of his return to London. Everybody exclaimed against this proceeding, but Uncle Timothy was firm. Hearing the lamentations of the whole party, and knowing them to be sincere, he said, that, "God willing" (he always inserted the D. V. when any distant plan was

proposed) "he would eat his Christmas dinner with them." This proposal caused his brother to rise and cross the room to shake him by the hand, and to declare "that one volunteer was worth a hundred press men," and that he was right glad he had not asked him this year. He added a clause, however, to his self-invitation.

"I shall bring down Anna," he said, "and, I believe, Miss Colville, who, Anna tells me, has at last obtained permission from her parents to spend her holidays at Fairfield, previously to her sailing for India. But I must propose another guest."

"Tiny!" exclaimed Jessie and Charles in a breath. "Oh, how nice! how I do long to see her! We know her quite well, Uncle Timothy, from Anna's description, who dotes upon her."

"Will you ask her to bring some of her drawings, and some of her father's, if she can?" said Charles modestly.

"That you may take her out sketching, and give her a fever?" said Uncle Timothy slyly. "She may bring them, provided you do not ask her to draw. The poor child is out of health, and wants a change, and Mrs. Eveleigh wishes to go and see some relation or other who does not care to have Tiny; and I am sure my niece Jessie will be kind to the poor fatherless child."

"That she will!" said Captain Burford; "she is kind to every one."

Here it may be well to say that Mr. Timothy Barnard's little *protégée* Sophia, or Tiny, as she had been called by Anna, on account of her slight small form, had grown up to the age of nine years under Mrs. Eveleigh's care. Mr. Barnard had thought of canvassing for her election into one of the various schools or charitable institutions for female orphans; but the idea of making her unfortunate case public, revolted against him, and he had allowed her to continue with Mrs. Eveleigh. Mrs. Eveleigh was a sufficiently sensible woman to teach her all that she required in her childhood, and, although not a person of high education, had a tolerably well-informed mind. Tiny could read and write, and make certain attempts at ciphering, but her greatest pleasure seemed to be in drawing. Surrounded by paintings from her infancy, she had acquired a love for them, and as Mrs. Eveleigh had picked up some knowledge of it from her husband, she fostered Tiny's talent, and the child was in the habit of drawing, like Charley, for her amusement. When Mr. Barnard saw this, he procured a master for her, and she had now been learning nearly two years, and had made considerable progress.

Anna, too, was getting on in age and accom-

plishments. Somehow or other she had made a complete conquest of her uncle. For instance, in one of her petulant moments she had given him to understand that she dreaded the time when she was to leave her novitiate, and become an actual teacher in Miss Primmerton's establishment. This was mere pride; but Uncle Timothy did not look upon it in that light, but fancied she was too young to see things as she ought, and therefore let her go on year after year a mere learner, and at an enormous expense. Anna was a great favourite of Miss Primmerton's, who was fond of her for her own sake and her uncle's. Miss Primmerton had taken advantage of Mr. Barnard's kind permission, and had consulted him more than once. She, like many of her over-worked sisterhood, suffered from violent nervous affection of the head; and it was this, between ourselves, that helped to make her temper irritable; for it is hard to teach—remember this, ye fractious and impatient and obstinate young people!—when the head is throbbing, and every nerve in it driving the teacher mad. Uncle Timothy had been of more service to Miss Primmerton, and had had more patience with her, than any other medical man whom she had before consulted: therefore she had in her turn more patience with his niece. I do not say this was right, but "one good turn

deserves another," and Miss Primmerton did not often meet with real consideration from the friends of her pupils. She was generally a governess and nothing more.

She strongly advised Mr. Timothy Barnard to let Anna be a teacher in her school for one year, at least, before she went into a family as governess. Jessie had given the same advice to Anna during the Midsummer vacation; so with much distaste, the half-year during which her brothers and sisters were suffering from one kind of fever, she was enduring another much worse in its way. She continued to receive lessons from the various masters, and to give them in turns to the younger pupils—or rather, she prepared them for the masters. She hated this, not so much because she disliked helping the children as because she was now a teacher. One or two of her former schoolfellows, over whom she had acquired a certain power in her capacity of elder pupil, now looked down upon her in that of teacher to the younger ones; and her pride was so constantly fighting against her propriety, that she had but little peace of mind.

Louisa Colville used to laugh and tell her that she wished she was a teacher, if it was only to show up the impertinence of such girls; but Anna's pride of heart was too deep for that; she could only

treat her former admirers with scorn, and let them feel, whenever she could, how much more beautiful, accomplished, and admired she was than they were.

When Uncle Timothy returned from the Grange, and went to see Anna, she heard, for the first time, of the dangerous illness of those she loved. She had wondered, over and over again, that no letters had arrived from home; but had attributed the silence to every cause but the right one. Now, how her warm heart was pained when she thought of what her brothers and her dear sister had suffered! Her first impulse was to entreat to be allowed to go home at once; but Uncle Timothy overruled this by assuring her that they were all doing well, and pointing out how near Christmas was—it was then October. The prospect of the journey home with her uncle, Louisa Colville, and her dear Tiny, comforted her, and she resolved not to mind the disagreeables of her life as teacher, but to put a brave face upon it, and to do her best. This she really did for three whole days; but on the fourth she flagged, thanks to the very simple question put by one of her former friends, of, "Are you likely to go as a governess to the Pynsents or the Burtons, Miss Burton?"

Thus was her own little pride of family turned

against herself, as indeed all pride generally is, in one way or other. But unfortunately her pride of beauty was continually fostered. In her daily walks, at her uncle's, at the very church door, from the masters, from Mrs. Hicks, from everybody, she constantly heard the words, "What a lovely girl!" Can we wonder that vanity swelled within her young, untutored heart?

CHAPTER VIII.

"How pleasant, when night falls down
And hides the wintry sun,
To see them come in to the blazing fire,
And know that their work is done;
Whilst many bring in, with a laugh and rhyme,
Green branches of holly for Christmas time!
Oh, the holly, the bright green holly!
It tells, like a tongue, that the times are jolly."

PROCTOR.

WHO shall describe the feelings of expectation and excitement of the family at Fairfield as Christmas approached? Who shall convey an idea of Jessie's preparations for her various guests,—of Aunt Betsey's devotion to her toilet,—of Pynsent's anxiety about the state of the cellar and the general finances,—of Charley's nervous sensations at the prospect of two strange young ladies,—of Farmer Barnard's palpitations at the certainty of frequent meetings with Miss Burton, the adored of his youth, —and, above all, of Dinah's trepidations at the influx of so much company? It was a wonder to see Jessie, just recovered from her fever, contriv-

ing sleeping apartments, arranging furniture, making mince-meat, cutting up sugar, salting beef, examining hams and tongues, compounding rich plum puddings, to be hung up and kept till Christmas came round again, making cakes, and helping to bake them, airing bed-linen, seeing to ashen faggots, looking at pickles, preserves, and elder wine; gathering evergreens, sending into the wood for misseltoe, making up messes for poor people's children,—for it was a severe winter, and there were no end of coughs and colds; stitching at all kinds of flannel petticoats, for Christmas presents for the labourers' wives and children; almost crying as she ordered certain fat geese and turkeys that she had reared to be slaughtered; talking of pigeon pie, but not having the heart to doom the birds that came to perch on her shoulder and eat out of her hand; scolding Pynsent for doing nothing to help her; aiding Aunt Betsey in the manufacture of a certain pomatum and wash for the hands, and sitting with Charley whenever she could find time.

And why should she sit with Charley? you ask. Because Charley is still suffering from the effects of the fever. As is often the case in typhus, it has left a sad legacy behind it. Nobody knows exactly where the evil has fixed itself, but for the

present, at least, Charley is almost helpless. He has a weakness somewhere, which has entirely deprived him of the use of his limbs. Whether it is in the spine or in the joints, the doctors cannot determine, as he suffers no pain; but it prevents his walking and sitting upright: so he is obliged to lie down all day long, on an inclined plane, and to take strengthening medicine, prepared and administered by Pynsent, who is anxiously expecting his uncle's arrival, to consult with him on this unfortunate case. Pynsent himself is not very strong yet, though he is pursuing his medical studies *con amore*. He pokes his nose into the cottage of every poor person who is sick, and has already gained some fame amongst them. He reads dry books and long cases all day long, and writes down the symptoms of the patients he voluntarily attends, every day, with a view to the future achievement of his fortunes, and the benefit of the human race. He intends to wait till Christmas is over, before he regularly establishes himself in his professsion, and has almost made up his mind, entirely on Jessie's account, to settle in his native place. He would give all he possesses in the world to have a fair start in London, and then to work his way to fame and fortune; but he feels that Jessie ought not to be left at Fairfield to combat with life alone,

and so, like a true-hearted brother, he will stay near her and help her.

Christmas-day is on a Thursday this year. On the Wednesday of the important and happy week, Charley lies on his back in the "parlour," not like the famous king, "counting out his money," but with a round table by his side, absolutely stoning raisins; whilst Jessie stands in the "kitchen," not like that king's equally celebrated queen, "eating bread and honey," but with her arms immersed in a brown pan full of flour, "making," not eating, like little Jack Horner, "a Christmas pie." Jessie is so intent on her work, and is singing so merrily over it, that she does not hear the stealthy footsteps behind her, nor see the two men that creep through the hall into the kitchen. If two of her senses are thus sealed up, the third, that of feeling, is speedily opened; for she suddenly becomes conscious of being caught in the arms of somebody or other, and having a hearty kiss imprinted on her lips.

"Don't, Pynsent!" she exclaims: when she perceives that it is not Pynsent, but a tall, upright, sunburnt young man, bearing a certain resemblance to the Nelson Burford that went to India eight or nine years ago. She gives a little scream of joy, blushes very much, and without thinking of the

flour, stretches out her hand, which, equally thoughtlessly, her childhood-affianced husband takes, and presses between both his own.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouts Captain Burford; "not a warm welcome, but a floury one! Isn't he grown, Jessie? He took me by surprise last night just in the same way, only I hadn't my arms bare and all over flour. I'll be bound, Nelson, you never saw that sort of thing in India."

Jessie had recovered herself, and stood blushing still, and smiling through certain tears that had appeared, and trembling somewhat, looking down into her pan of flour. Nelson glanced at her, and thought her prettier and more delicate-looking at five-and-twenty than she was at seventeen. He had fully made up his mind to meet her with the utmost friendly discretion—a brotherly shake of the hand, and nothing more: but that sweet, pleasant voice that he had loved to hear when a child, and the dear old hall and familiar house and furniture, had got over him, and, in spite of himself, he had given that warm embrace to his playfellow and friend.

Be it known at once that Lieutenant Burford, of the Bengal Light Cavalry, has not come home, like many Indian officers, in search of a wife, but in search of health, like most of them. Indeed,

he has determined not to marry, and has already cautioned his father against his old whim of calling Jessie his wife, which accounts for the worthy Captain's silence on that subject at their first meeting, to him a very difficult matter. Moreover, Lieutenant Burford intends to treat the warm-hearted friend of his youth as a friend, and nothing more—an intention which he is evidently carrying out by calling her Jessie every second minute, and following her about just as he used to do. Still I affirm that he is not what is vulgarly called "in love" with her, though he loves her very much: but if Jessie is not "in love" with him, she assuredly never will be with anybody. To prevent all kind of unnecessary guessing about the matter, I will confess at once that she is sincerely attached to him, and has been all her life—ever since she was born. Some women are capable of such an attachment—such women as Jessie—true, single-hearted creatures, who go about everything with a downright purpose, and cannot change.

Jessie was obliged just to finish that pie, and wash her hands, and make herself neat, so she begged her friends to go and see Charley, and sent to tell Aunt Betsey to go down quick into the parlour. But before she had half finished, Nelson was back again, to tell her that he had seen Peter,

—the brother who had only written twice since he left home,—and had five hundred messages and twenty presents from him to all. That he was the greatest pickle in the ship, and the favourite of all his messmates, but under frequent condemnation of the Captain. That he was every inch a sailor, and loved his profession next to his sisters; such was his expression. That he "meant to come home some day with lots of prize money, and kick up such a shindy as never was." That he really would write oftener if he could, but that there was so much to do on shipboard, and so much to see on shore, that he never found time. He told Nelson to be sure to say that he never forgot any of them; in proof of which he produced a perfect bazaar of articles that he had collected at different ports, all ticketed, and which he desired Nelson to give Jessie, that she might distribute them as marked amongst his friends. The Captain of his ship, the "Bonne Espérance," told Nelson that he was the bravest, most careless, hardiest, and most untameable of all his midshipmen: but that he would be a capital sailor, and had already shown great courage and skill on more than one occasion. He was fond of him, but obliged to keep a tight hand on him for fear of insubordination. Nelson ventured to say, that Peter might be done anything

with by kindness, and driven to do anything by severity.

On Wednesday Pynsent was at the Inn with the car, to receive the expected guests. They had taken the inside of the coach, to the disappointment of many other passengers; and as Pynsent shook hands with his uncle, kissed his sister, bowed to Miss Colville, and lifted out Tiny, the bystanders all thought that the family at Fairfield must have had an influx of fortune, to account for such an influx of guests. A cart and horse was in waiting to receive the luggage, which they disposed of first; and when the travellers were seated inside the car, Pynsent took the driving seat, and they were soon on their way to Fairfield, Anna chattering for the whole party, in high spirits.

Jessie meanwhile was in a great fuss. Aunt Betsey was seated in state in the parlour, dressed for company; and Charley had begged for a fire in his bed-room, to avoid the first meeting with the strange young ladies. It was a fine, frosty day, and Fairfield looked bright and sunny. Jessie heard the wheels, and rushed out to the gate. Anna was soon in her arms. Oh! such hugging and kissing! she quite forgot her politeness.

"Here is Louisa Colville," said Anna.

"Oh, I know you quite well!" said Louisa, as

Jessie, rather shyly, put out her hand; "I am so glad to come and see you," and herewith she gave Jessie a hearty kiss; this was followed by another from Uncle Timothy. "And here is Tiny," said Anna, bringing forward the shy child, who had crept behind her.

Jessie saw nothing but long brown curls, for the little face was bent down. She made her way through the curls, and kissed the sweet pale face: then took the trembling little hand, and proceeded to the house.

Here again all was presentation and bustle. Aunt Betsey curtseyed with much grace. Uncle Timothy just touched the tips of her fingers; and there was no outpouring of affection anywhere. "Quite right," some genteel moralist may say, "we have had enough of kissing for one chapter."

Boxes are carried upstairs, whilst the travellers warm themselves round the hall-fire, whither they have gone, from the parlour, at Pynsent's suggestion, who never was 'fine' in his life, and would not see his aunt's nods and winks. He thinks Louisa Colville a very pretty girl, but he does not think or care much about anything but Physic. The London ladies are much pleased and surprised at the large hall and chimney corner, and at the evergreens with which it is fairly covered, to say

nothing of the fire on the hearth. Anna runs straight to see Charley, and Jessie directs the placing of the luggage.

"Oh, Anna, this is charming! perfect Elysium!" said Louisa Colville to Anna as she entered their room. "It is all what one reads about in books. India, London, and the country are three different worlds. And Anna, your sister is much prettier than I fancied she would be, and your brother much stiffer. Why did he not shake hands with me, I wonder? That formal London bow was too smart for the country; and what a grand lady your aunt is! She is so like you, Anna. Oh! it is so charming, and I am so happy already. Hurrah for Fairfield, and good bye to Miss Primmerton and her spectacles! I never thought I should have got out of poor Pussey's claws."

"I wish I were out of them," said Anna; "I'll never go back again as teacher, come what may."

"Oh, what is that on the window-sill?" asked Miss Colville, looking frightened.

"Only one of Jessie's pigeons, little Mousey," replied Anna; "don't be afraid, we will let him in;" and she opened the window, and in flew a pair of beautiful white pigeons.

The two girls turned their bags inside out for the crumbs remaining from their travelling stores,

and Miss Colville soon forgot Miss Primmerton, and her unpacking, in her new delight at such unaccustomed guests.

Whilst they were feeding the pigeons, Jessie and Tiny were differently occupied. When the child's wrappings were taken off, Jessie had time and opportunity to wonder at her appearance; she was so small and delicate-looking, that she scarcely seemed earthly. The curls that fell over her pale face, like sunbeams streaking a small white cloud, were the only living things about her: for her large, melancholy, violet eyes could not be said to have life or fire in them; not, at least, when Jessie thus looked at them; they seemed made for tears. She was dressed very simply and inexpensively, in a dark brown frock, and plain white trousers; and she was particular in having a clean pinafore on, before she finished her toilet. Jessie looked at her with pity, and thought how unnatural it was for a child to be so grave and pale; so calm and spiritual and passionless a face is seldom seen in childhood, and painful when seen: still she was beautiful, rarely beautiful, in her statue-like quietude. Her features were small but regular, and her complexion sparklingly fair,—like Parian marble, gleaming but colourless. Nobody could tell why her young face so seldom wore the spring-

tide smiles of childhood. She seemed happy with Mrs. Eveleigh, who loved her, and whom she considered her mother. But there was small congeniality between their two natures. Mrs. Eveleigh was a kind-hearted, talkative woman, with a great taste for fancy needlework and management: always busy, and anxious that the child should be employed. Tiny was a secret-hearted, silent little girl, about whose quiet thoughts Mrs. Eveleigh knew no more than she did about the current that ran beneath the river by the little farm where she was born; though she loved the calm river, and often dreamt of it, in her small suburban home. Tiny had learnt to do fancy needlework and plain needlework too; had helped to manufacture articles for sale, as well as her own garments; and she had always done her best, and been generally docile and obedient; but the only occupation she seemed to take to with all her heart was drawing. She had no companions, no friends of her own age. To say the truth, Mrs. Eveleigh was rather shunned by the neighbours, she did not know why, and, with the exception of an elderly couple who lived next door, and who, like herself, kept very much to themselves, she had no acquaintances. Tiny was so shy whenever her guardian came to see her, that it was impossible to

say whether she liked him or not: and when she paid him a visit, Mrs. Hicks always frightened her so terribly, that she lost all her good manners. She was more at home with Anna; but she again was so merry, and had so many little odd, half-teasing, half-playful ways, that she seldom ventured to go much beyond a "Yes" and "No," or gentle questionings about her brothers, sister, and school-fellows, even with her.

"Shall I brush your hair for you, dear?" asked Jessie, as Tiny took a neat little bag containing a hair-brush, etc., from her one box.

"No, thank you, Ma'am, I always do it myself," replied Tiny, and immediately set about arranging her pretty curls, without the help of a glass.

"Now, Tiny," said Jessie, "you must tell me of all you wish and want whilst you are here. I am not used to your ways yet, and I am anxious to know all that will please you most, that you may be very happy."

And is that face so passionless and calm, after all? Look now! Large eyes with big tears in them,—thin nostrils, and pale lips quivering with some sudden emotion, but no colour; not the faintest symptoms of a blush. She looks up, for the first time, into Jessie's kind, truthful eyes,—she sees that she means what she says.

"Thank you," she breathes rather than speaks. "I should like to see Charley."

"Charley is not very well," Jessie said, looking surprised; "but I will ask him to let me take you to him."

"Not if he dislikes it," said the child.

Jessie went away and soon returned, bearing Charley's somewhat ungracious consent. She took the little girl by the hand, and was surprised to feel that she trembled. Charley was lying on a couch by the fire in his bed-room, with a large portfolio posted up against his knees before him, on which was a sketch that he had been attempting to finish. A small table by his side was covered with paints, pencils, and all kinds of drawing materials. Charley had felt the same kind of interest in Tiny, that she had felt in him. Each had heard of the other's one engrossing pursuit, and the pursuit was the same in both. This is introduction enough to many people. Yet Tiny's morsel of a hand shook very much when she put it into Charley's, and Jessie almost laughed at their extreme solemnity.

"Now you must come down to dinner, Tiny," said Jessie, "and by-and-by you shall see some of Charley's drawings."

Tiny obeyed, once more putting her little hand into Charley's, but not venturing to look at him as she did so.

"Is he very ill?" she asked timidly of Jessie as they went down the passage.

Jessie's reply was drowned by a shout of laughter from the "best bed-room." She knocked at the door. "Come in," was the reply. They entered, and found the two young ladies surrounded by a whole flock of pigeons. Anna had sent for grain to please Miss Colville, and Dinah, the bearer, was standing by, marvelling at the unwonted amusement of the strangers. Tiny at first peeped behind Jessie; but the sight of the pigeons overcame her timidity, and she was soon in the midst of them. Perhaps she thought that where such gentle shy creatures as those soft white birds could fly, she surely might find a place also. Two or three of them were soon perched on Jessie's head and shoulders, and feeding from her hands; but Jessie had a kindly feeling for the bed-side carpets, and Dinah's scrubbed floor, and waited a fitting opportunity to dismiss them.

"Jessie! Jessie!" whispered a voice near. It was Pynsent, looking cross. "Are you not coming down to dinner?"

The door was wide open, and as he crept along the passage, and called Jessie, he could not help looking in. He was amused at the scene, which was too irresistible to be let alone, in spite of the Lon-

don misses. He clapped his hands, stamped his feet, and uttered a loud "Whoo-oo!" as he went past the room unseen by its inmates. Off flew the pigeons in a dreadful fright; up started Tiny from the floor, on which she was sitting, and Louisa from her kneeling posture, both looking scared. Anna shut the door, and Jessie exclaimed, "It is only Pynsent; he is always getting up some joke or other."

Louisa Colville looked in the glass. Her hair was decidedly untidy; but then it was very nice long glossy fair hair, and it did not really matter, though she thought it did.

Down they all went to dinner at last, and found Mr. Barnard in the hall in earnest conversation with his brother, who had seen Charley, and did not well know what to make of his case. The worthy farmer looked serious for him, but soon brightened up at the sight of so much youth and beauty as the five damsels came trooping in.

"Well, niece Anna, how d'e do?" said he, giving the beauty such a kiss and such a shake of the hand as disarranged the curls, and almost put her wrist out of joint.

Anna was a little bit annoyed, because she did not want Louisa Colville to see Uncle James just yet. Oh, that wicked pride of hers! But Louisa held out her hand very prettily and shyly when

Jessie introduced her, and Anna was pleased to see that she rather took to her bluff uncle, and bore the shake better than she herself had done. In truth Louisa Colville was a girl of strong likings and dislikings. She had taken to Anna, and she took instinctively to every person and thing at Fairfield, even to Dinah's red cheeks, staring blue eyes, and half-open mouth. No, there was one exception—she did not take to Aunt Betsey.

After dinner, whilst the gentlemen sit round the table, Jessie insists upon the ladies lying down for an hour or so to prepare themselves for the evening. This they do, and are soon fast asleep. Tiny is the first to awake. She is a nervous child, and is frightened at finding herself in that large strange room alone. It is quite dark except for the firelight, which just peeps in through the curtains. Her heart beats quickly. She creeps out of bed, and goes up to the fire. She does not know what o'clock it is, and has an invincible fear of ghosts. She is afraid to ring the bell, so she opens the door and goes into the passage. It is darker still, and she is frightened to death. Charley's room is next door. She thinks she sees a light through a crevice; she taps gently, and is told to come in. Uncle Timothy and Charley are there.

"I am afraid," she said, trembling very much.

Uncle Timothy goes to her, leads her in, and seats her in an old-fashioned chintz-covered chair by the fire, where she soon falls fast asleep. Uncle Timothy looks kindly at her, strokes her hair, and asks Charley to let her stay with him, then leaves the room. Charley's pencil is soon employed, and the little sleeping angel (for such she looks) is quickly sketched by the young artist:—the pale face, half veiled by the curls—one hand underneath the cheek, the other hanging by her side—the feet curled up on the chair—and the firelight flickering about her.

Jessie comes in to take her downstairs, but thinks she looks too tired for romping, so leaves her to her slumbers; and Charley knows that the excitement of Christmas Eve and Christmas games would be too much for him, so promises Jessie to dine with the party tomorrow, if they will let him stay as he is tonight. The request granted, Jessie quits the silent pair, and Charley begins to put colours on his picture, until a second Tiny lives upon the white paper.

By-and-by Tiny awakes. She looks about her, and seems to ask the usual question on such occasions, "Where am I?" When she sees Charley, she smiles and gets quietly down from her chair, and stands by him as if asking him to speak to her.

Strange that he, too, should feel shy; but he sees only the artist in the child, and thinks her quite old. At last he shows her the half-finished sketch he has before him. She is delighted with it, and says "What a pretty child! how beautifully sketched!" She does not know it is her own likeness.

And now they begin to talk of pictures. Tiny has the advantage here, for she has studied all Mr. Eveleigh's paintings, and seen those of her drawing master. Moreover she has visited the National Gallery, and been twice with Anna to the Exhibition. She can tell of Landseer's horses, and of Cooper's cows and sheep, as yet only visions in the mind of Charley. But Jessie comes again, and seeing her fresh and sleepless, says she must come downstairs and see the Christmas sports, so she wishes Charley a reluctant "good night." In hops Anna, and cries, "Charley, you must come down; it is wretched to have a Christmas eve without you. You can lie on the settle or in the chimney-corner quite snugly, and we should all be so much happier. There is Jessie running up and down stairs—Pynsent fidgeting—Uncles Timothy and James wondering whether it would hurt you—that tall military Lieutenant Burford begging to say he will bring you down—Captain Burford fussing—and

Louisa Colville hoping it is not on her account; so indeed you must come."

"Very well," said Charley, looking like a victim, "you know I should like it, only—"

Off goes Anna like a shot; returns, followed by Pynsent and Nelson, who gently take up Charley in their arms, and carry him downstairs. The girls seize the mattress and pillows, which are soon arranged upon the settle, and he is almost as soon placed upon them. The dreaded introduction to Miss Colville over, he feels very glad that he has joined such a happy party, and immediately begins in his mind's eye to group beautiful pictures from the flitting and varied forms about him. Tiny seats herself at his feet, and seems pleased with everything, in her own demure, quiet way: and so they wait awhile, till the veritable sports begin.

CHAPTER IX.

"On Christmas Eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung;
The merriest night of all the year,
To eat and drink and make good cheer."

All the family party are assembled in the hall; all the servants and labourers in the kitchen. The tables are covered with mugs, cups, and glasses of all sorts and sizes; cider and ale are there for the men and women, wine for the ladies. Cakes, biscuits, nuts, almonds, and raisins, and all sorts of sweets, are on the hall-table; cold beef and bread and cheese on the kitchen-table. Filling both hearths, and threatening to burn to death the overpowered "dogs," are enormous ashen faggots, bound together by numerous strong dry withs. Already they are beginning to burn, sparkle, and crackle; and the assembled party watch earnestly the withs, cup and glass in hand.

"Crack! snap! bounce!" goes one of the withs, loosening the imprisoned faggot at one end, and

giving it up more easily to the flames. "Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!" sounds from the kitchen as the labourers press into the doorway of the hall. "Health to Miss Jessie and Master Pynsent,—hip, hip, hurrah!" all the drinking-vessels are drained and lfiled again.

"Crack! snap! bounce!" goes another, with "Health to Miss Anna and Master Charley,—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!" sounds through hall and kitchen, both now filled promiscuously with all the guests, rich and poor: cups and glasses drained again.

"Crack! snap! bounce!" goes one of the withs of the kitchen faggot. "Health to Master Peter, far away over zea, and may he zoon come back again,—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!"—more cups and glasses drained.

"I cannot drink more, thank you," says Miss Colville, sitting down, because she can no longer stand for laughing.

"Oh, you must," replies Pynsent, filling her wine-glass with hot elder wine, of which delicious, spicy beverage there is a great quantity.

"Crack! snap! bounce!" again in the hall. The middle with is parted, and such a bang it gives that Tiny starts back in affright. "Health to Miss Betsey Burton and Mr. James Barnard,—

hip, hip, hip, hurrah!"—the coupling of this pair is an understood joke, and causes a suppressed titter.

So fast snap the withs that there is now scarcely time to empty and replenish the glasses between each. "Captain Burford and Master Nelson,—hip, hip,—Mr. Timothy Barnard,—hurrah! The strange young Lummun ladies,—hip, hip,—and all the good Burton family, and all belonging to them, here, there, and everywhere,—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!" and three cheers and musical honours, and "We won't go home till morning," led by Captain Burford and Farmer Barnard; and enough hot cider and elder wine to make the whole party very nearly, if not quite, tipsy.

All the withs have cracked, snapped, and bounced, and the big pieces of wood that they bound are left to burn out brightly and cheerily on the hearths. Scarcely have the two divisions of hall and kitchen found their level, when they are aroused by sounds of singing out of doors—anything but the "music of the spheres." All rush into the passage, and open the door. The bright winter moon almost walks in—she quite looks in—as do some score of men and women, each bearing pitchers and jugs. And she might look down on many a worse scene: those three pretty girls and that sweet child, all laughing

and wondering in front, with their heads poked out into the frosty air, and their white frocks shining in the moonlight; behind them all kinds of male forms and faces, looking over their shoulders, and laughing heartily; above them the leafless branches of the creeper, covered with hoar frost, and gleaming, like frosted silver, beneath the moon; in front, some in light and some in shadow, grotesque figures clad in all kinds of cloaks and shawls, red, grey, brown, and yellow, looking and sounding more like the inhabitants of Pandemonium than, as I hinted before, of Elysium,—men, women, and children, with mouths wide open, carrying vessels, also with mouths wide open, and the said mouths apparently asking to be filled. They are singing a Christmas carol with all their hearts; and as all my readers will not, I hope, be Somersetshire, a verse or two are subjoined for their edification. It must be premised that the word "wassail" is accented on the last syllable, and that the carollers pronounce it very broad, as "wassaail."

"Wassâil and wassâil all round our town;
The cup it is white, and the ale it is brown;
The cup it is made of the good old ashen tree,
And so is your ale of the best barley.
'Tis our wassâil,—'tis your wassâil,
And joy be to our jolly wassâil.

"Good master and good mistress a-sitting by the fire,
Whilst we poor souls are out in the mire;
Pray send out your maid with the silver-headed pin,
To open the door and let us all come in;
For 'tis our wassâil,—'tis your wassâil,
And joy be to our jolly wassâil," etc., etc.

Whilst these and other verses of a similar sort were being sung, a little Christmas pantomime was being carried on amongst the young people. Anna was leaning in the most graceful of attitudes against the door-post, and joining heart and soul in the carol. The rays of the moon on her dark glossy hair were like a crown; and the black eyes shot a volley of incautious, aimless darts out into the night. Louisa Colville had one hand lightly laid on her shoulder, and was holding Tiny with the other. Anna had twined some ivy and holly into her friend's neatly braided golden hair; and the two girls, the brunette and the blonde, contrasted prettily, as they stood carelessly side by side. Leaning against the opposite door-post, deep in shadow, was Nelson Burford, and not far from him Pynsent. Most people will anticipate me when I say that they were neither gazing at the moon nor joining in the singing, but looking very earnestly and admiringly at their *vis-à-vis*. Jessie suddenly appeared, followed by Dinah and one of the men, bearing pitchers brimming with cider. Whilst these were

being emptied in the various jugs and cans of the carollers, Tiny slipt away to Charley, and Nelson also vanished; he however soon returned, carrying a large red table-cloth with a black border, that he had found somewhere.

"You will surely take cold, young ladies," he said; "will you allow me to offer you a very rough shawl?" and, without waiting for permission, he placed the unusual garment across the shoulders of the two girls, who, laughing and blushing, drew it around them.

"Quite *à la* Paul and Virginia," said Pynsent sarcastically. "Bless me, how polite you have grown!" he added aside to Nelson.

"How very thoughtful of you, Nelson!" said Jessie, who had been out in the court, helping the wassailers to cider, and who really looked cold.

"He might have given it to you, I think," growled the Captain.

Here broke in another carol:—

"There was an old man who had an old cow,
And how for to keep it he couldn't tell how;
So he built up a barn, to keep his cow warm;
And a drop of good liquor will do us no harm.
Harm, boys, harm; harm, boys, harm;
And a drop of good liquor will do us no harm."

Away went the motley group of Christmas carollers, and were soon succeeded by others, to

whose various ditties the Fairfieldites were content to listen through a closed door, but all of whom had their quota of cider, thanks to Jessie's liberality.

"Please, Miss, here's the zingers," said Dinah confidentially to Jessie.

"Ask them into the kitchen, and give them some bread and cheese and cider," said Jessie.

Soon a tumult of sounds issued from the kitchen: violin, violoncello, flute, fife, and "all kinds of music," accompanied by every gradation of voice.

"We must come out and hear them," said Jessie, "or they will not like it."

"Oh, by all means," said Miss Colville, clapping her hands, "I never had such fun in my life! Have they anything of this sort in India, Mr. Burford?"

Nelson was talking to Anna, who was giving him a most animated description of Miss Primmerton. "I beg your pardon," he said, starting round.

"Never mind," said Louisa, and followed Jessie and the rest into the kitchen.

They were obliged to put off all Christmas gambols and games to another evening, and to have supper as soon as the singing was concluded. Here

Nelson's military politeness to the ladies shone far more brightly than Pynsent's. As it was genuine, and inherited from his excellent father, nobody but Pynsent remarked upon it. He, who had never found time for the graces himself, was particularly struck by them in his friend, and did not fail to comment upon them in various little asides, both to their possessor and the Captain.

Nelson was a tall, good-looking young man, with very marked features. He had much softness of eye, and gentleness of manner; but there was an unmistakable determination about his mouth, that a physiognomist would have called almost rigid. This was particularly remarkable when he was thoughtful; and he had a habit of putting his left elbow into his right hand, and leaning his cheek upon the back of his left hand, bending his head, and gazing upon seeming vacancy, that displayed this particular feature, and a fine Roman nose, to advantage. It must be confessed that he was stern and obstinate when his temper was much tried, as well as when he had quite made up his mind to anything; and Jessie knew that mildness and gentleness alone could ever succeed in changing his purpose; at least, so it had been when he was young, and so she fancied it was still. His mind once made up, powerful influence was neces-

sary to turn it. She was very much pleased to find him so polite and attentive to the young ladies; and although he could not, of necessity, be now always by her side as he used to be when they were younger, still she frequently met his eye, and its soft light, and the smile that relieved the slight sternness of his mouth, always gave her joy. Perhaps they also occasioned rather an uncomfortable beating of her heart, usually so regular in its pulsations; but this she thought very foolish, and a thing to struggle against.

They all slept so well that night, that there was a regular scramble to get breakfast over in time to walk a mile and a half to church, on Christmas morning. Besides, it took longer than usual to perform the customary greetings. The "Merry Christmas, and happy New Year when it comes," went round so often, that Tiny found herself repeating it softly at breakfast, she not having had courage to say it aloud. She now mentally addressed each member of the party, and wondered what it all meant. She had never known a "Merry Christmas," although she had spent one or two Christmas days with Anna at Uncle Timothy's. It is sad to think how many children in that great wilderness of London have never known a "Merry Christmas," or a "Happy New

Year." Mrs. Eveleigh had considered it a point of duty to keep Tiny constantly employed; so that on such days as were genuine holidays to all, she had been chained to collects, hymns, catechisms, and Bible and Gospel history, with a view, Mrs. Eveleigh thought, to her teaching them herself some day.

Here, everybody was joyous, and she began to feel joyous too: true, it was a moonshiny, not a sunshiny joyousness—still her little heart was glad. Everybody was kind and loving to the child; everybody stroked her soft, silky hair; everybody tried to make her laugh a good, natural laugh; and Mr. James Barnard caught her up in his arms, and seated her on his shoulder, which action, though it terrified, gave her a strange sensation of pleasure. In all probability she would have been upon his head, had not Aunt Betsey suddenly appeared, and checked the farmer's playfulness.

How different was that brisk, cheerful walk through the frost-bitten fields, by the spangled hedgerows, over the crisp ice, along the hard turnpike road, to the prim two and two of Miss Primmerton's "family," when on their way to church; or the quiet precision of Mrs. Eveleigh, when she led Tiny by the hand to their nearest

place of worship! How the pedestrians amused themselves by wishing everybody they met the compliments of the season; and how they admired the little stars of laurel-leaves affixed to each pane in the cottage windows, by bright red wafers! And the little village church! Louisa Colville and Tiny could not fix their attention on the service, I am ashamed to say, though they tried hard to do so, they were so struck by the garden of evergreens around them. Branches of holly and ivy in the pulpit and reading desk; more branches in all the windows; more standing upright in an incredible manner from every pew. Tiny longed to pilfer a bunch, but she had a sort of notion that it would be sacrilege, so she chased away the wicked desire, and was rather troubled in conscience when she heard the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal."

Mr. Michelson and his son Chatham sat in a very bower of evergreens; the big, curtained, escutcheoned pew, being regularly perforated to admit the stalks. Chatham was continually glancing from between two very pompous holly-bushes at the young damsels in their muffs and furs; and even Mr. Michelson occasionally rested his golden eyeglass on his prayer book, to take a furtive look into the opposite pew. Once or twice Anna caught his eye, and she could with difficulty refrain from

a smile of greeting. Tiny, too, when admiring that large spray of holly and the tempting red berries just in front of Mr. Michelson, saw that he was looking at her, and wondered who those fine gentlemen could be in the great pew.

Even through Uncle Timothy's pious mind, recollections of years gone by crept like a dream at the sight of the Christmas flowers; although his eyes wandered not, and he joined in each response with the soul as well as the lips. He was a fine example to his nephew Pynsent, as he knelt down on the bare boards of the pew, the hassocks being scarce, and preoccupied; was he not a fine example to many men, both young and old, who enter the house of God, professedly to worship Him, yet will not condescend to bend their knees before Him, but sit irreverently, whilst prayers for their eternal salvation and the good of the whole world are offering up? Would they dare to sit thus were they petitioning an earthly monarch for ever so trifling a grace? Ah, no! then why pay less honour to a heavenly? Truly God is patient and longsuffering, and He is "provoked every day."

There was one, at least, in that little church, whose whole heart was in the service—doubtless there were many—but we thank God that we know of one. Jessie's mind strayed not that day

from her devotions. She felt that she had so many to pray for, so much to be thankful for; something to appropriate for herself or others, in every prayer and thanksgiving of our sublime Liturgy, that she had no time for wandering thoughts, or space for the tempting spirit of evil to creep in. And we have every reason to believe that the petitions of one so harmless and humble-minded were heard by Him, who, when on earth, set such a lovely example of purity and humility.

When the service was concluded, our party walked briskly home. Captain Burford and Nelson were awaiting them, they having been to their own parish church; and roast beef, turkey, and plum-puddings, were craving to be put upon the table. With good appetites and good tempers all sat down to dinner, and nobody envied Mr. Michelson and his son Chatham's lonely splendour at the Hall. In the kitchen were some dozen aged women, pensioners of Jessie's, who were to partake of the good Christmas cheer. Charles had a snug little round table close to his couch, and Tiny insisted, whispering her insistance to Jessie, upon carrying his plate to and fro, and waiting on him: she thought a great deal more of his dinner than of her own. Jessie and Pynsent had given place to Aunt Betsey and Farmer Barnard, who

took, at their request, the top and bottom of the table, the sides of which were filled by well-assorted pairs, who had fallen together, nobody knew how. Uncle Timothy and his dear Jessie, Captain Burford and Tiny, on one side; Pynsent and Louisa Colville, Nelson and Anna, on the other. All looked pleased except Captain Burford, and he was unusually silent, in spite of Jessie's efforts at conversation.

"Let me give you some bread sauce, Miss Annabella," said Nelson.

"Why are you so stiff as to call me 'Miss'?" inquired Anna, laughing. "You do not call Jessie, *Miss* Jessie."

"Oh! because you are so changed, that I cannot look upon you as the Anna of former times; whereas your sister is much as she used to be."

"And why am I so much more changed than Jessie?"

"You were a little saucy child when I saw you last, and now—"

"And now—?" repeated Anna anxiously.

"She is a very saucy young woman," interrupted Pynsent, rather snappishly.

"Thank you, Pynsent," said Anna; "you might at least have let *Mr.* Burford find that out for himself;" with a stress upon the "Mr."

"Mr. Burford is not likely to find out anything unpleasing in connection with Anna Burton," said Nelson, with a glance of admiration at Anna's beautiful face.

"Now, Nelson, I hope you are not grown a flatterer," said his father; "I heard what you said."

"I never flatter willingly," replied Nelson, colouring.

Jessie had also heard what Nelson said, and seen the glance. Why did she heave an involuntary sigh, as she perceived that Anna was neither insensible to the compliment, nor the admiration?

Christmas-day passed off quickly and happily; and many plans were formed for the ensuing week, of which more in their proper places. The gentlemen, old and young, were very attentive to the ladies; accompanied them in a long walk, and made themselves useful and agreeable, as gallant, well-mannered gentlemen should do; only once or twice had Anna to scold Pynsent for some breach of politeness to Louisa Colville, and to receive a "Do you think me a dandy, or an exquisite, Anna?" from Pynsent in return.

The following morning they were honoured by an unexpected call from Mr. Michelson; he came about the election, but as the gentlemen were out,

he found other matter of conversation for the ladies. They were variously occupied: Aunt Betsey was knitting, as usual; Jessie was giving orders and superintending household matters; Anna was netting a purse; Louisa Colville was reading, and Tiny and Charley were busily engaged in drawing at the little table placed by the couch of the latter. A large bright fire was burning in the grate of the parlour where they were sitting, and altogether they looked as cheerful and pretty a party as could be. When the greetings and introductions were over, Mr. Michelson said, addressing Anna—

"And is it possible that you can be the child that I met some years ago? You are exactly what your aunt was when I had first the pleasure of her acquaintance; and I suppose you are now perfectly accomplished: you play, you sing, you dance, *vous parlez Français,e Italiano. Ah! parla ella Italiano?*"

"*Sì, Signore,*" replied Anna, with perfect self-possession.

They then began a short conversation in Italian, in which Mr. Michelson said he would give worlds to show Anna the beauties of Italy, and take her himself to see the magnificent works of art, *di quel paese magnifico.* This led to his asking what the young artists at the side table were about, still in Italian.

"Tiny," said Anna, "bring Mr. Michelson that old castle you have just been drawing, he would like to see it. She has drawn it from imagination entirely, Mr. Michelson."

Tiny looked frightened, but obeyed.

"Who is that child?" asked Mr. Michelson.

"A ward of my uncle's," replied Anna.

"What is your name, little girl?" asked Mr. Michelson, heedless of the drawing she held.

"Sophia, Sir; but they call me Tiny, because Anna thinks me so little."

"Sophia what?" asked Mr. Michelson.

"Sophia Eveleigh," replied Tiny, looking terrified at such repeated questions.

Mr. Michelson seemed satisfied, and the large vein on his forehead that had started out at the name "Sophia," decreased at that of Eveleigh. He took the drawing, and, with a voice of pure astonishment, asked if it were possible that the child could have, herself, done the drawing she presented.

"Yes," she said timidly.

"And is my old friend Charley as clever as you are?" he asked.

"Much cleverer, Sir," replied Tiny, peeping into his face. For the first time, her eyes met his; she did not like their expression, but quietly crept back to her chair, near Charles. Mr. Michelson

followed her, and whilst professedly looking over Charles's drawing, was gazing fixedly at her.

"My nephew is said to have a great talent for drawing, Mr. Michelson," said Aunt Betsey, "and he is very anxious to become an artist; but I am sure his father would not have liked him to stoop so low."

"Low, Madam!" said Mr. Michelson, starting as if from a dream. "*Superba! Brava!* Is that your sketch of your sister, Sir?" he exclaimed enthusiastically, looking for the first time at Charley's drawing, which was a likeness of Anna. "Self-taught! You must be better taught. Madam, it would be a disgrace to let this talent be buried here. Your nephew must go abroad: he must study."

Charley sighed.

"I could give him introductions,—facilitate his studying,—make him one of the first of English artists, or I am no judge of talent."

Charley lifted himself up on his couch, his face flushed with sudden joy.

"Oh, could you?" he exclaimed; "would you? will you?"

"I believe I could and would assist you," said Mr. Michelson, gazing with admiration on the lovely portrait.

The colour again faded from Charles's cheeks, as he suddenly remembered his seemingly incurable weakness. Mr. Michelson perceived it, and remembered that he had heard of his never having recovered from the fever.

"We will talk of this another day," he said; "perhaps you will now show me some more sketches."

Anna rose and produced a rough portfolio, full of drawings, which she displayed to Mr. Michelson, one after another, and his genuine love of the art, and perfect connoisseurship, enabled him to appreciate their different merits. There were some of Tiny's amongst them, equally clever, but in a different way. Charley's were all from nature,—hers either copies or imaginative sketches, as she had had no opportunities of studying from nature. Mr. Michelson's love of the beautiful was called forth in all its bearings. Here stood Anna, her graceful figure bending over the table by his side; there Tiny, whose pale spirituality troubled him; and here again the tokens of great natural genius in paintings of no mean beauty. Anywhere else, Louisa Colville would have attracted him, but she sank into mediocrity beside the loveliness of her friend.

And the gipsy, Anna, knew her power. She perceived that her womanly charms had completed

the conquest that the childish graces had begun, and she was proud to have made a temporary slave of the great Mr. Michelson, though she did not display her satisfaction.

After some general conversation about the election and canvassing the ladies, Mr. Michelson took his leave, and Anna was ringing his praises when Uncle Timothy and Pynsent returned from their walk, to undergo a repetition of his sayings and doings.

CHAPTER X.

"On blithesome frolics bent, the youthful swains,
While every work of man is laid at rest,
Fond o'er the river crowd, in various sport
And revelry dissolved."

"And as they sweep
On sounding skates, a thousand different ways,
In circling poise, swift as the winds along,
The then gay land is maddened into joy."—THOMSON.

ON the following Monday Jessie and Pynsent left home immediately after breakfast, and all Anna's curiosity could not find out where they were going. As they walked quickly on, their voices sounded cheerily through the frosty air, and it was evident they were bound on no unpleasant errand. In about half an hour they reached a smart gentleman's house,—a house, at least, built some hundred yards off the road, and enclosed by shrubs and iron palings. It was something like one of the many "Citizens' Boxes" near London, and evidenced more of wealth than taste.

They walked up a short drive, rang the bell, and

asked if Mr. Skinner was at home. They were shown into a room originally intended for a library, but converted into an office, by means of innumerable parchments and papers. Here, at a large desk, sat a very little shrivelled-up man; his skin looked like one of his own parchments, and his eyes like two little mice, eating their way through it. He was not a very old man, but the wrinkles in his forehead, and about the corners of his mouth, might have been the furrows of a century's ploughing.

"How do you do, Miss Burton? how do you do, Mr. Pynsent?" he said, expressing himself very slowly, and apparently with difficulty. "You are the most regular paymasters I have—always to the day: if your father had been like you, debts would never have accumulated as they did."

Pynsent took a leather pocket-book out of his pocket, from whence he drew a large packet of bank-notes.

"There are fifty pounds for the last half-year's interest," he said, placing a portion of the notes before Mr. Skinner.

"Thank you," said Mr. Skinner, slowly counting and examining the notes. Finding them satisfactory, he wrote a receipt, acknowledging the half-year's interest on two thousand pounds at five per

cent. Pynsent took it, placed it in his pocket-book, and again began counting bank-notes, whilst Mr. Skinner looked on with a pleased astonishment in his twinkling eyes, as if some unexpected good luck were happening to him.

"Now, Mr. Skinner," said Pynsent, "I have the pleasure of paying you two hundred pounds, in part of the principal, which will reduce our debt to you, for the money you were good enough to lend my father upon mortgage on Fairfield, to eighteen hundred pounds, and the annual interest to ninety."

Mr. Skinner opened his eyes with wonder, as he took the roll of bank-notes, and said—

"How is this, Mr. Pynsent?—how is this? have you had a legacy left, or stepped into a good profession?"

"My sister has managed to put by from twenty to thirty pounds a year, for the last eight or nine years, and you will soon find that the two hundred are thus raised without legacies."

Mr. Skinner looked up from the notes he was counting, at the smiling rosy face of Jessie; he contemplated her so inquiringly, that she blushed, and almost laughed, as she said—

"Oh, Mr. Skinner, I assure you Pynsent has saved as well as I. He put by something every

year out of his small allowance in London, and if he had been at home when the hundred pounds were ready, we should have brought part of the money before.

"You are a wonderful young woman," said Mr. Skinner very slowly, giving emphasis to each word. "Here is a stamped receipt, and now you must come and take something."

"Oh no! we have only just breakfasted, thank you," said Jessie.

"By all means, if you please, Mr. Skinner," said Pynsent; "a frosty walk, and a hasty breakfast before it, have given me a second appetite."

Jessie looked reproachfully at Pynsent, who smiled knowingly at her in return. Mr. Skinner asked them to follow him, and he led them into a good dining-room, where were the remains of breakfast; that is, one teacup and saucer, a small teapot, and two empty basins.

"My children are just gone to school," said Mr. Skinner; "they would have been very glad to have seen you, Miss Jessie: they often talk of you, and say how kind you are to them."

Jessie had no idea that she had ever been kind to them.

Mr. Skinner rang the bell, and ordered refreshments. The servant stared. She went away how-

ever, and returned with some bread and cheese, and a small portion of butter. Mr. Skinner felt for his keys, and left the room; soon after, a little jug of cider appeared. He then carefully unlocked the sideboard, and produced a few dry biscuits and a nearly empty decanter.

"You will understand, Miss Burton," he said, "*why* I am obliged to lock away these things myself: servants are not to be trusted with sweets or wine."

Pouring out half a glass of wine, he offered it to Jessie, together with the biscuits. She declined both, but on his pressing her very much, took a biscuit, which she found it impossible to eat. Pynsent, on the contrary, seemed to be seized with an unusually voracious appetite and an uncommon thirst. Not only did he drink Mr. Skinner's health in one glass of wine, but he toasted his children in the remaining glass, which emptied the decanter. Then he thought it necessary to try what kind of cider Mr. Skinner's apples made, and found that as they made very fair cider, he would do the jug the honour of emptying it, pledging Mr. Skinner gravely as he did so. The small piece of butter soon disappeared, as he laid it thickly on the bread, and ate it with cheese, telling Mr. Skinner that he liked to be economical, and therefore made one

piece of bread do for both butter and cheese. When he had got through as much as he could of these viands, he tried the biscuits, but here he evidently came to a stop. He coughed violently, and saying that it was so odd that dry biscuits always caused a tickling in his throat, he drank the remainder of the cider. Jessie tried in vain to catch his eye. He would eat and drink, although she knew that he had never drank in his life before at so early an hour. Mr. Skinner glanced in a troubled way at his diminishing edibles, and anon with an inquisitive twinkle of the eye at Jessie. He scanned her well, and appeared to have an agreeable impression of her.

"And you really saved that two hundred pounds out of your small property, Miss? You are an honour to your family." This he repeated more than once, until Jessie began to feel uncomfortable. She asked about his little girls, and he said that they had gone sadly to waste since the death of his wife. He questioned her closely concerning the expenses of her housekeeping, to which Pynsent answered that she was really so very stingy, there was no living with her; a fact that accounted for his doing such credit to Mr. Skinner's good cheer. Mr. Skinner said, laying great stress on each separate word—

"Well done, Miss Jessie! well done, Miss Jessie!" and proceeded to assure her that if her forefathers had done the same, she and her brothers and sister would be rich people now.

At last Pynsent had wished Mr. Skinner his last "merry Christmas," and told him that he would do himself the pleasure of lunching with him again shortly, and Jessie had touched the tips of his bony fingers, and they were fairly out of the gates.

"Now, Jessie, I declare I can walk no further," said Pynsent; "I think I shall go back, and dine with old Skinner."

"What is the matter with you, Pynsent? you certainly are out of your senses."

"That hard cheese and sour cider will be sure to give me an apoplectic fit: but didn't I do the old sinner? Why, Jessie, if he had but turned his head, I meant to pocket the remainder of the loaf: I really could not eat it. Hurrah! The first meal that anybody ever got out of him. Nobody ever ate too much before in his house. How Captain Burford will enjoy the joke!"

"Ah, but," said Jessie, "the children and servants will suffer for it."

"I never thought of that, upon my word. We'll give them a dinner this Christmas instead. Only to think of that old fellow's father having been

bailiff to our grandfather, and the pair having got rich upon our losses!"

Here a discussion ensued upon parsimony and prodigality.

"What carriage is that coming up our road?" interrupted Jessie: "there—close by the turnpike? Isn't Nelson driving? Yes, it is a fly; what can be the matter?"

They hastened to meet the vehicle, and to their astonishment found that it contained Charley and Tiny.

"Oh, Nelson, how kind and thoughtful of you!" exclaimed Jessie, giving Nelson a glance of genuine pleasure and gratitude.

"He was determined that I should not finish my sketch today," said Charley, laughing, "and took me up in his arms, paint all over, and brought me here, on this mattress, as comfortably as possible."

"And said there was room for me," whispered Tiny, "and I like it so much!"

"Now, Jessie, you squeeze in opposite the little one," said Nelson, "and Pynsent can walk back, and escort the other ladies, who are just started with Mr. Barnard. My father is waiting, and the moor is full of people."

Jessie got in, feeling great admiration of Nel-

son, and delight at his being more friendly in his manners than he had been the previous day.

They soon arrived at the Captain's house, and were in due time followed by the rest of the party. Charley was first snugly settled in a large *chaise longue* by the library fire, with a variety of papers and magazines before him, and told to ring if he wanted anything; and then the Captain's preparations began. He had procured a quantity of list from all the tailors and sempstresses in the town, and he told the young men to twist it round the feet of the ladies. The ladies blushed and laughed, and the gentlemen declared themselves "willing."

"Now Jessie, my dear, you are the eldest," said the Captain; "come, Nelson."

Jessie put forth her foot, clad in a large, sensible pair of thick boots; and a very tidy foot and ankle it was.

"I think you had better let me do it myself, Nelson," she said; but Nelson insisted, and succeeded in twisting the list round the foot, and finally pinning it securely.

"Now you won't slip on the ice," said the Captain.

Anna and Louisa's feet were simultaneously extended, and similarly operated upon by both the young men. Nelson admired Anna's pretty little

foot, but agreed with the Captain in thinking her boots too thin for winter.

"You would do for Iceland, Miss Colville," said the Captain; "those fur boots and that muff and fur cape would be just the things for a Russian winter, and are almost as good for such a day as this on our moor. Ah, there is the pretty little foot! Come to me, Tiny, and let me dress it up."

The Captain took Tiny on his knee, and carefully wrapped her boots in list.

"Oh, you cold little mouse!" he said; "you are not half wrapped up. Nelson, tell Jane to bring down that big cape lined with fur."

By-and-by Tiny was scarcely to be seen, thanks to "the big cape lined with fur," which fairly covered her up; and Charley longed to make a picture of her little pale face peeping out from her curls like a white rose-bud from its leaves. Miss Burton made rather a point of trimming her own boots, but Nelson overcame her modest scruples; and at last they were all ready, and all rough-shod.

"Here are skates for you, Pynsent," said Nelson, "and mine are in the arbour, with the chair."

"Good bye," said Tiny to Charles, as if she were never going to see him any more.

They went through the back door and down a large garden, that was very pretty in summer, but

now covered with frost. At the bottom of the garden was a summer-house, from whence Nelson procured his skates, and whither he called Pynsent to help him to drag forth a large armchair. Across the legs of this chair he had caused two pieces of sharpened iron to be placed, in the shape of skates, and bearing the article triumphantly along, they proceeded. At the bottom of the garden ran a river, or rather stood a river, for it was hard frozen. Over the river was a little rustic bridge, which led our party to as gay and original a scene as England could produce. They entered what was generally an immense moor, stretching as far as the eye could reach on all sides. It had been under water during late floods, and was now a huge sheet of hard ice, smooth and slippery as glass, save where skates had formed whimsical figures on its surface. Such a frost had not happened within the memory of man, and only once before did any one remember to have seen the moor frozen.

The full, broad, bare-faced winter sun is pouring a flood of pale dazzling light upon the ice-field, which gleams and sparkles, but does not melt at his glances—very much like a cold-hearted flirt, who receives, without apparent return, the adoration of a lover, and is unmoved by his devotion. Many-coloured dresses of smart ladies and children

spring up like flowers upon the plain, and contrast prettily with the sparkling ice on which they slip and slide about—and gentlemen in skates flit here and there, literally cutting through sunbeams above and below, and looking in the far distance like motes at play. Here noisy children are making long slides on the ice and rendering it dangerous to the walkers, whilst their merry voices ring through the frosty air as they plump down in all kinds of unseemly postures in the midst of their play; there a luckless and unpractised skater may be seen seated in undignified attitude, with his legs in the air; whilst the red-checked damsel, who is laughing at him, and who is not provided, by a gallant sailor, with list for her feet, suddenly finds herself prostrate at his side amongst the shouts of her companions. Yonder a group of old and young are helping one another over a particularly difficult place, and treading gingerly as if each step would be their last, whilst near them some three or four "unprotected females" have fairly come to a stand, afraid to proceed at all.

When our little party came upon this frozen lake they paused awhile to look about them, and to wonder where such numbers of people of all ranks, ages, and sexes could have come from. It was almost as large a fair as that on the Thames in the

time of the Great Frost. Uncle Timothy and Tiny were decided cowards, and the rest were obliged to encourage them onwards at every step, when they began to move. As they crept along, literally "feeling their way," they were accosted by friends and acquaintances in endless succession, all too nervous about their safe footing, to pause long for conversation. Nelson and Pynsent had donned their skates, and were gliding on quietly behind the armchair, that slid along as glibly and invitingly as possible.

"Who will have a slide in our sledge?" asked Nelson, addressing the ladies.

Each was too timid to begin.

"Let me set the example," cried Pynsent. "Now Nelson, off with you!"

Pynsent got into the chair, and off it flew, like a bird, guided by Nelson from behind. It was something new, and everybody stopped to look on. Nelson was a famous skater, and had been practising the chair privately for a day or two, so he pushed it onwards as easily as possible.

"I am to have half the profits," exclaimed a young man skating up to Nelson. "It goes famously, Burford. How d'ye do? Good morning, Mr. Burford. Will you accept the services of another rein-deer?" and he put himself side by

side with Nelson at the back of the chair, and they all three went on together, until they returned to the original starting-point.

"Now then," said Pynsent, getting out, "who's afraid?"

"How d'ye do, Captain Burford?" said the stranger, shaking hands with the Captain. "Will you introduce me?" he added, glancing at the ladies.

"I don't exactly know," whispered the Captain, "it is dangerous."

"Where did you collect so much beauty? pray introduce me."

"Allow me to present Mr. Chatham Michelson, ladies: I beg your pardon, Captain Michelson. Miss Colville—the Miss Burtons—Mr. Barnard, the brother of an old friend of yours, and tenant of your father's."

Captain Michelson bowed to the ladies, and held out his hand to Uncle Timothy, saying that he was delighted to make his acquaintance. Uncle Timothy, in his surprise at being expected to shake hands, forgot the ice and slipped, but Captain Michelson held him up dexterously, in short almost caught him in his arms. This excited the risible faculties of Anna, who burst into a hearty laugh. Hers was such a ringing, merry laugh, that it sounded

through the frosty air like a peal of distant bells; and in spite of her aunt's displeased countenance it rang on, until Captain Michelson had safely landed Uncle Timothy again, and recovered his own equilibrium, by which time everybody else was laughing. Captain Michelson caught Anna's eye, and was infected by her merriment. Indeed the white teeth, shining beneath the red lips like pearls set in rubies, had laughter in them; to say nothing of that bright black eye which seemed to shoot sunbeams.

"I have a great mind to upset you, Anna," said Uncle Timothy.

"Then we should surely fall together, Uncle," replied Anna.

"Now, Miss Colville, will you take the chair?" said Pynsent; "we shall lose our fare if we stand laughing any longer."

"I am half afraid," replied Louisa, "but I will try, if you will promise not to upset me."

"We promise, we promise," cried the three young men simultaneously; and in a second the chair and its attendants were careering about, to the great admiration of everybody.

"What a handsome young man!" said Uncle Timothy, as Chatham Michelson shot over the ice, now, like his companions, impelling the chair, and now skating by its side.

So thought the ladies, and so must most people of taste have thought.

Back in due course of time came the chair in triumph. Groups had formed to watch its evolutions, and the Burtons were joined by many other fair damsels, who hoped to have a push in so delightful a machine.

"Now, Aunt Betsey," said Pynsent, "you must try;" and after some pressing, Aunt Betsey was whirled away.

Captain Michelson came in contact with some friends, and stopped to speak to them. The chair went on without him, and before he came up with it again, Anna was seated in it, Pynsent pushing, and Nelson at her side.

"Oh, it is delightful!" said Anna, as she looked from Nelson to Captain Michelson; "how could you have thought of such a thing?"

"All done upon mathematical principles, I assure you," said Captain Michelson. "Was it not, Burford?"

"Three male Graces around a female Apollo," said a voice near. It was Mr. Michelson, senior, and Anna thought that Chatham looked vexed when he saw him.

This was a particularly long ride, or drive, or slide, or whatever you may be pleased to call it.

and a very merry one, for Anna did nothing but talk and laugh, and her swains were not backward in joining her.

"Your turn now, Jessie," said Nelson, when they suddenly came across their friends, who had changed quarters.

"Take Tiny and this little girl first," said Jessie; "they will like it so much, and can go together."

The other little girl was a small Skinner, that Jessie had found shivering and crying with cold, beside a little maid-servant, with an equally small sister by her side. She had taken possession of the pair, and told the servant to run about and slide. The children were borne off, clinging closely to one another and the chair; but they soon lost Chatham, who managed to find himself talking to Louisa Colville, when the much-admired chariot drew up. Jessie had another little Skinner and some half a score of young ladies to propose.

"I tell you what it is, Jessie," said Nelson, "the chair is my own particular property, and if you will not get into it next, nobody else shall."

Nelson looked resolved, and Jessie obeyed, stipulating however for the small Skinner on her lap, to which Nelson rather gruffly consented.

"You will want all hands with a double load," said Captain Michelson, starting the chair and

beginning to talk to Jessie, as if he were quite at home with her. "I know you very well by report, Miss Burton. Poor Miss Rutherford met you once or twice at different cottages, so she told me, and spoke of you with much regard."

"Where is she now?" asked Jessie. "I liked her very much."

"Nobody seems to know," said Chatham; "she went away suddenly, and has never been heard of since, I believe."

It was now Nelson's turn to disappear, beckoned for by Mr. Michelson, *père*.

"Will you kindly lend your chair for Miss Erskine? she is dying to try it; she is with Sir Thomas Mansford's party,—a great heiress, so you had better throw a cast for her. Tell Chatham that I want him."

Off flew Nelson.

"Michelson, your father wants you."

"Then he can't have me just at present," was the dutiful reply.

"He wishes us to give some Miss Erskine a turn; or rather Miss Erskine wishes it, or both," said Nelson.

"Very likely, but let her wait," said Chatham drily, and went on talking to Jessie.

"You don't want me any longer," said Pynsent

when they stopped again; "I am tired of skating," and he began to unbuckle his skates.

"Nonsense, Pynsent!" said Nelson; "don't give up."

"Oh! I'll begin again by-and-by; but I am not going to run after Mr. Michelson's heiresses, nor to skate after them either."

Here Mr. Michelson appeared. After speaking briefly to those around, he repeated his request.

"We will return for those other young ladies you mentioned, directly," said Chatham, addressing Jessie. "You had better get in, father, and we will pilot you over."

Away went the chair, with Mr. Michelson therein, a good half-mile across the moor, to where a party of very well-dressed ladies and gentlemen were standing. Bows and introductions passed, and Miss Erskine was immediately satisfied. She was rather a handsome girl, but very stout. The "wheels of the chariot" certainly "tarried" somewhat, but Miss Erskine was so charmed with their motion that there was no getting her out of it.

"One turn more! one turn more!" was the young lady's cry, until at last Captain Michelson and Nelson fairly halted before her party. They were then obliged to do the civil to one or two

more ladies, but gave them as short rounds as possible, their centre of attraction being evidently in some other part of the plain, whither they went as soon as they could with propriety do so.

The Captain (we call Captain Burford *the* Captain, *par excellence*, because we look upon him as our especial captain), he, meanwhile, Uncle Timothy, and Pynsent, had been escorting a number of ladies over the ice, and watching the various amusements that were going on. They had set Tiny and the two little Skinners to slide, and had slidden themselves to show them how. The Captain had had a tumble, and Uncle Timothy had laughed at him, in payment of his laughter on a similar occasion. Anna had found the ice so irresistible, that she had been sliding too, reminded of her childish days, when she and her twin brother, Peter, used to slide upon the pond at home. Poor Peter! where was he now? Louisa Colville had been somewhat scandalized by her friend's performance, and had looked round to see if there were any other people near, but found that they were tolerably private. Just as Anna was in the middle of a triumphantly long slide, however, up came the chair, and when she finished, she ran behind Uncle Timothy to hide her blushes: not but that she was almost, if not quite, as tall as her uncle.

"Now, Miss Annabella, we have caught you in the act," said Nelson, himself a little scandalized, for he had most strict notions of female propriety, "and you shall be punished by having the very last and worst performance on our stage. Would you like one more whirl before the sun fairly goes away?"

Was anything ever more lovely, either in nature or art, than Anna's face, as she came smiling from behind her uncle? Impossible. Her cheeks, made brilliant by exercise, frost, sunshine, and blushes, were brighter and softer than the "red, red rose" at daybreak. Her jet black hair, somewhat disarranged by her exertions, half covered, foliage-like, those "red, red cheeks;" and the eyes, like two bright, wandering butterflies as they were, glanced down upon them, just touching them with their soft hair. Aurora never stepped into her car at morning, more radiant in beauty and bewitching in grace, than did the half-abashed, half-conscious girl into hers. Alas, that she should know her power! But how can she help it? Look at every individual about her, and see the glances of admiration in every eye.

"Come, Tiny," she said, "you must have one turn with me."

They placed the child on her lap, and she encir-

cled her with one arm, whilst she held the elbow of the chair with the other hand. There was a piece of board for the feet, so she was quite at her ease.

"That girl will be ruined," said Lady Mansford to Mr. Michelson; "she is really too beautiful to be thrown upon the world and her own resources, as I hear she is to be."

Mr. Michelson put up his eye-glass, and did not appear to be particularly pleased when he saw his son Chatham in animated conversation with the beauty, and Nelson and he both drinking in all kinds of feelings with her sparkling glances. They were so much occupied in listening to her merry sallies, that they did not perceive the top of an old post, that projected about a foot above the ice, on one side, or Mr. Michelson's party on the other. Suddenly one of the slides on which the chair was placed, struck violently against the post, and such was the force of the concussion, that Tiny was thrown out, almost at the feet of Mr. Michelson, and the chair upset, with its burden, on the ice.

Now all was terror and confusion. The two young men assisted Anna to rise, who, if not seriously injured, was hurt by the fall, and unable to move for some minutes. They placed her gently on the chair, and she tried to laugh off the acci-

dent, but there was an evident longing, on the part of her mouth, either to cry or groan. However, she was soon diverted from her own pain by a buzz of voices in consternation near her. She looked round, and the young men's glances followed hers. They had all forgotten Tiny for the moment. Now they saw her in Mr. Michelson's arms, apparently lifeless, and Lady Mansford and Miss Erskine unfastening her bonnet, and stanching blood that was flowing from her temples. Anna went to her, despite her pain, which was great.

"Tiny, darling," she exclaimed, "are you dead? Have we killed her? Oh, Mr. Michelson, for heaven's sake tell me!"

"I think she is only stunned," said Lady Mansford; "do not be alarmed."

As to Mr. Michelson, he was almost as pale as the child he held in his arms.

"You had better put her at once into the chair," said Nelson, "and take her to our house. Anna, do you think you can carry her? for you too ought to get back at once."

"Oh yes!" said Anna, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

They put Anna into the chair, and Mr. Michelson laid the child half-reluctantly in her arms.

"Will you find Mr. Burton, or Mr. Timothy Barnard, Mr. Michelson," said Nelson; "they are both here. Send them to my father's at once. Now, Chatham, gently but swiftly."

They were soon at the bottom of Captain Burford's garden. The young men were obliged to take off their skates, which occasioned some delay. Nelson had done first, so taking Tiny, still senseless, in his arms, he ran up the walk to the house. Chatham offered his arm to Anna, and they followed slowly. She had slightly sprained her ankle, and pain and fright had chased all the colour from her cheeks. Thus they reached the house.

CHAPTER XI.

"Love at first sight, firstborn, and heir to all,
Made this night thus. Henceforward squall nor storm
Could keep me from the Eden where she dwelt."—TENNYSON.

MR. MICHELSON wished Lady Mansford and her party a hasty good-morning, promising to see them again at dinner-time, and hurried off in search of the doctors. He felt a sudden and unaccountable interest in the fate of the child. As she lay, like a wounded dove, motionless at his feet, and afterwards in his arms, feelings had entered into his soul that had never found a place there before. Hitherto his love had been passion; his admiration self-gratification; his friendship mere temporary sensation: all had been "of the earth earthy." Even his paternal sentiments had been those of gratified vanity, if his son did well and was admired; of angry pique, if he did ill and was evil spoken of. Now the first seed of some heavenly flower was invisibly sown in his heart; he felt it germinating quickly. He looked on the pale,

stricken child, and would have risked his being, for the moment, to recall the poor lamb to consciousness. When he had once seen her before, he had admired her tender beauty, but now he loved her appealing innocence and crushed sweetness. He went hither and thither, until he found the Burtons; cursing the slippery ice, the chair, the folly of the young men, the very attractions of Anna, to which he had himself bowed.

"From the sublime to the ridiculous" we must now descend; the "step" is taken to see the various efforts of Captain Burford, Uncle Timothy, Pynsent, Mr. Michelson, Aunt Betsey, and Miss Colville to hurry across the ice. Jessie, active by nature and habit, has soon outstripped them, and reaches the garden without any great drawbacks; but they seem to find slips and slides at every step. Poor Uncle Timothy, whose ardour is the greatest, —next, perhaps, to that of Mr. Michelson,—is the slowest to proceed, and must have been twenty times on his nose had not Pynsent been near to help him up; it was a decidedly painful position for two doctors hastening to an insensible patient. Then the list came off Aunt Betsey's shoes, and she could not venture to stir a step until it was put on again. Mr. Michelson, out of all patience, went on before, and had made some progress when

he thoughtlessly stepped on one of the long slides left by the boys, and fell, or rather sat, down somewhat unmajestically for so portly a personage. Once down on this most glassy slide, he could not get up again, and was sprawling, with hands and feet slipping onwards, and again cursing all hard frosts, when the rest came up to him. Louisa Colville and Pynsent were trying to smother a laugh, which would force itself in spite of Tiny, when Aunt Betsey, condoling with Mr. Michelson and forgetful of herself, slipped in her turn, and, catching hold of that gentleman just as he was managing to rise, pulled him down again. Gravity fell with them, and Captain Burford's loud, hearty laugh was echoed by the three others, to the great disgust of the prostrate pair, who however were compelled to join in it.

They all reached the house at last, and found Tiny already restored to consciousness, lying on Charley's chair, who, to the astonishment of everybody, was sitting by her side. Jessie was bathing her temples, and following up the remedies that Charley had begun before she came. Sudden fear had done for Charles what extreme weakness and nervousness had prevented his having the courage to do for himself—made him move voluntarily from the reclining posture in which he had been so long placed.

Uncle Timothy and Pynsent said there was no serious injury, but that she must be kept very quiet; and also that Anna must do her best to be still for a day or two, as her ankle was already much swelled. Fortunately for Mr. Michelson, Aunt Betsey was there, and he heard from her, who thought of him when nobody else did, of Tiny's state. He begged her to ask the doctors to allow him to see the child before he left, as he should feel less anxious about her when he knew how she looked. Permission being granted, he went into the library, and his son slipped in after him; it was quite a hospital. Tiny put her hand into Mr. Michelson's, and whispered that she was not hurt, and thanked him timidly for his kindness. Everybody wondered at Mr. Michelson's anxious face and his gentle manner to the little girl. Chatham meanwhile was standing by Anna's sofa, and listening to her hearty laughter over the whole affair. Jessie, as usual, was occupied with the patient, and to her Mr. Michelson turned, with a look of great complacency, as if he would express his gratitude for some favour bestowed on himself. Perhaps he never before admired any one for mere goodness, but he did so now. So true it is that there is a deep, intricate spring somewhere or other in every heart, be it selfish or

depraved, that a certain peculiar touch can move: once moved, it is not difficult to open many closed compartments, that would, but for that first delicate touch, have been closed for ever. Mr. Michelson bent over the fair child and kissed her forehead before he took his departure, and seemed almost to have forgotten his former favourite, Anna, in his sudden fancy for her. He wished her good-morning, however, and hoped that they should meet again on the ice on the morrow, as he beckoned Chatham away.

When they were gone, Captain Burford decided that it would be impossible for any of the others to go home that night, and told Jessie that she and his housekeeper must improvise beds, since sleep in his house they should. As the house was a large one there was no great difficulty, especially as Pynsent and Nelson arranged to repose on two old-fashioned sofas in the drawing-room by the fire.

During the course of the afternoon, Pynsent communicated to Captain Burford the circumstances of his and Jessie's morning's interview with Mr. Skinner. The Captain was in raptures.

"I declare," he said, "there never was anybody in the world like Jessie; there was only one of her came over in three ships, I am morally certain. What a lucky fellow Nelson will be!"

A shade passed over Pynsent's brow.

"I say, Captain," he began, and paused.

"And what do you say, Surgeon?" asked the Captain: "speak out, man."

"That I think we shall be doing no good, either to Nelson or Jessie, by talking of the old agreement between you and my father about their marriage."

"Odds bobs, Sir! what do you mean? I shall talk of what I like. Am I, at my age, to be tutored by a pack of youngsters? That is just a second edition of Nelson's gibberish and new-fangled nonsense; and I can assure you I only bore it from him because he was just returned; he had better not try again."

"I beg your pardon, Sir," said Pynsent, "only I felt assured that you would not like to annoy Jessie; and I think it might annoy her."

"I'll be hanged, Master Pynsent, if ever I annoyed her in my life, or ever shall," responded the Captain, dashing out of the room, and slamming the door after him.

The cause of his irascibility was Nelson's very decided devotion to Anna's sprained ankle, to the total estrangement of his attention from Jessie.

In the evening, when they were all grouped round a large fire, telling riddles and ghost stories

by the fire-light, the Captain, who had been hitherto a listener, suddenly exclaimed—

"Now I will tell you one of the prettiest stories that I have heard for a long time." And he forthwith began to detail, with illustrations and additions of his own, the history of Pynsent and Jessie's two hundred pounds. He used feigned names, and mixed it up with many sea phrases, so as to conceal the actual *dramatis personæ* from all but their individual selves; but he made the little episode so charming that everybody exclaimed, "What a beautiful sketch! what a delightful, worthy, amiable pair! Do not you like that now, Jessie?" Whilst poor Jessie was blushing redder than the fire.

"I think Jessie could have done that," whispered Tiny to Charles, who had now resumed his *chaise longue*, and had the child, as usual, close to him.

The Captain overheard.

"So she could, little 'cute Tiny, and so she did: that was Jessie and Pynsent. What do you think of that, Nelson? I take it you have not heard anything better than that in India. What a wife she will make! I only wish you were worthy of her; but you are not, and she won't have you!"

"I do not think there is any one in the world worthy of Jessie," said Charles with sudden animation.

"You are trying hard to spoil her by flattery," said Uncle Timothy, taking the blushing girl's hand playfully; "we are all liable to be spoilt by that dangerous charm."

"Not Jessie," said Nelson emphatically; "she is one of the few who has been, and will be, always the same."

Jessie looked up involuntarily at the speaker, and a tear swelled in her eyes as she met Nelson's glance: it was beaming with the old affectionate admiration—the one look that seemed to say, "There is nobody in the world like her!"

"I must run away, I see," she said hurriedly, rising and going towards the door.

"No, no," said half-a-dozen voices; and "no" acted Nelson, as he ran to the door and stood with his back to it.

Jessie returned to her seat, and by some strange chance Nelson found himself by her side, and the foot of Anna's sofa was deserted. The Captain looked pleased once more, and the evening went off very merrily, in spite of the accident, which rather gave cause for amusement than lamentation.

Meanwhile, Mr. Michelson and Chatham were

having a fashionable unnaturally late dinner at Sir Thomas Mansford's, and in the course of the evening the following conversation took place between Mr. Michelson and Lady Mansford; that is to say, we will break in upon their secrets where it suits us: not that they are secrets, after all, because Chatham and Miss Erskine occasionally join.

"I cannot help thinking she would suit Lady Georgiana," said Lady Mansford, "if she were not so handsome. You have no idea what a disagreeable thing it is sometimes to have a very handsome governess."

"But," suggested Mr. Michelson, "my sister-in-law has no grown-up sons, or even grown-up nephews, except Chatham, who never goes near her."

"And if she had," said Chatham, "she would be superior to such vulgar prejudice. My Aunt Georgiana is a very sensible woman."

"Many sensible women object to beautiful governesses," said Lady Mansford, laughing. "For my own part, if I had children, I think I would rather have a good-looking than an ugly teacher for them, because they are generally discriminators and lovers of beauty. But I certainly like Miss Burton. There is a certain aristocratic air about

her, derived both from nature and family, that bespeaks the real lady; and I should be sorry to see her placed with low-bred people, who would treat her as an inferior."

"That my aunt would never do," said Chatham; "besides, so beautiful a girl ought to be with some one who would take an interest in her well-doing, and who would act the *chaperon*, if not the mother, by her, and tell her what to do in difficult cases."

"What difficult cases?" asked Mr. Michelson. "I think women always know how to take care of themselves; and I am sure that black-eyed little coquette will not be behindhand."

"Poor girl! she has no mother," said Lady Mansford; "and in being cast upon the world will need a friend, or I greatly mistake. What do you really think of Lady Georgiana?"

"That if you will write to her, and sound her upon the subject, I will sound the Burtons; and perhaps between us we may do either some good or some harm."

"You seem greatly interested in their conversation," said Miss Erskine to Chatham, rather maliciously. "Who is this very beautiful Miss Burton?"

"I really scarcely know," replied Chatham,

slightly embarrassed by the suddenness of the question. "She is of a highly respectable family, who have been somewhat reduced in circumstances, people say by pride and improvidence; but as I have been little in this county until lately, I have never been introduced to her, or her sister, until today."

"Really!" said Miss Erskine, astonished, "I should have thought you quite old acquaintances; you were as friendly as possible."

"Oh! it does not take long, you know, to get acquainted with young ladies on their preferment," said Chatham; "you and I only met yesterday."

With this dubious and very rude speech, Chatham walked to the other end of the room, followed by a look of supreme displeasure from his father.

The following day Mr. Michelson called on Captain Burford, and, after having been closeted with him some time, proposed sending for Anna to ask her whether she would like to accept a situation as governess, if one were offered to her. She came limping and laughing into the room, and Mr. Michelson inquired about her sprain, and then for Tiny; both were pretty well, and she was ready to go upon the ice again.

"Do you intend returning to London again?" asked Mr. Michelson.

"I believe so," replied Anna with a blank look, "I have no choice."

"If I might be allowed to ask, would you prefer going elsewhere?"

"Anywhere in the world," said Anna; "I hate Miss Primmerton's, and cannot bear the idea of going back."

"Then you would, perhaps, prefer entering a family as governess, if a good situation were to offer?"

"Oh yes! I should like that fifty times better."

"Lady Mansford told me yesterday that my late wife's sister, Lady Georgiana Meredith, was a short time ago inquiring for a governess for her two little girls: we thought it might suit you."

"Delightfully!" said Anna without further consideration. "Will you write directly, and I can go after the holidays."

Mr. Michelson smiled, and fixed his full, uncomfortable eyes on her animated face. He admired, and she knew it. "He will do anything for me," she thought.

"You settle matters as quickly as we are obliged to do in a storm, Anna," said Captain Burford. "We must consult the other authorities before we decide."

"At all events," said Mr. Michelson, "I will make the necessary inquiries; there can be no harm in that."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Michelson!" said Anna. "Where does Lady Georgiana live?"

"I am afraid that will be the most disagreeable part of the matter," replied Mr. Michelson, "for her abode is a great way off. She lives almost wholly in Wales."

"That is charming," said Anna, "I long to go into Wales. Only fancy, Captain Burford, living amongst those grand mountains, and seeing goats, and shepherdesses with broad hats and crooks, and waterfalls, and ravines, and picturesque peasantry, and I do not know what besides. Oh, I must run and tell Jessie directly!" and away she went.

"I am afraid the barren hills of Cardiganshire will disappoint her," said Mr. Michelson, "although I believe the country contains many beauties; however, we will not disenchant her. Do you think she is fit for a governess?"

"I scarcely know what to say," replied Captain Burford; "but I dare say she will be broken in, like the rest of them."

"And how is your little friend?" asked Mr. Michelson; "is she still with you?"

"Will you come into the drawing-room, and

there you will find her. They all remained here last night."

In the drawing-room not only Tiny was found, but, to Mr. Michelson's evident annoyance, his son Chatham. Anna was not talking of the Welsh mountains, not choosing to do so for reasons best known to herself, before the gallant young Captain, but was declaring herself quite ready to go upon the ice, and into the chair again.

"I think you had better not, Anna," said Jessie; "it will look strange after your accident, and you may have another upset."

"You know, Miss Burton," said Chatham, "it is always safest to travel by the coach that broke down last, because the coachman is always more careful, and the horses are better harnessed."

Jessie shook her head.

"I do not think your brother will go with you again," said Louisa Colville; "and Mr. Burford said he had had enough of it."

The two gentlemen alluded to were not present.

"It is possible to do very well without Nelson and Pynsent," said Anna. "At all events we can go down upon the ice. Uncle Timothy, Captain Burford, will you come? Mr. Michelson, will you come down to the moor?"

Mr. Michelson was engaged in talking to Tiny,

but he assented. Tiny said she would stay with Charles, and Uncle Timothy declared himself afraid; but the rest prepared to go,—Jessie rather reluctantly, as she disliked the idea of the numerous questions their appearance would draw forth: they had already had some score of inquiries.

Soon after they had left the house, the two young men came in.

"Where is Jessie?" asked Pynsent.

"Gone down to the moor," replied Charles, "with the rest."

"What in the world do they do there again to-day? They had *éclat* enough yesterday."

"Captain Michelson asked them to go, and Anna seemed to wish it," said Uncle Timothy; "but Jessie was decidedly averse."

"I should think so," remarked Pynsent.

"We had better go after them," said Nelson; "perhaps Chatham may have out the chair, and in his harum-scarum way do mischief."

"I must go home," replied Pynsent. "Besides, I have no ambition for that kind of popularity. I hate the questions, 'How did it happen? Where were they hurt?' and so on, just as much as I hate having to tell the story. Don't you, Uncle Timothy?"

"For my part," said his uncle, "I take refuge

under cover of professional secresy. I give it to be understood that I never talk about my patients or their families, and so nobody asks me."

"Tell Jessie that I shall be here with the car at three," said Pynsent. "Tiny must not walk so far; and I think that scapegrace, Anna, would be much better if she kept quiet, so advise her to come with Charles."

"I do not imagine she would take my advice,' said Nelson, "but I will tell Jessie."

Pynsent went to fetch the car, and Nelson to see after his guests. The latter muttered to himself something to the effect that "women were all full of vanity and folly, and that Annabella Burton was the vainest and silliest of her sex; that they were all pleasure-seekers, and sacrificed every feeling of propriety for mere temporary gratification." And all this because poor Anna liked the innocent amusement of walking and gliding about on the ice! Men are always so hard upon the follies of women, and so lenient to their own. "She was literally limping," pursued Nelson to himself, "this very morning; and just because a handsome young man was in the way, she must needs expose herself to a second sprain. Indeed I think it might do her good to have one. How different she is from Jessie!" here Nelson heaved a sigh; "and yet

do what one will, one cannot help paying her more attention, and thinking more of her than of her sister. It is a shame that one of her coquettish glances should have more power than the pure, truthful looks of that high-minded, true-hearted Jessie. But what have I to do with either of them? Why should I take such a vast interest as to whether Anna is falling in love with Chatham Michelson, and he with her,—I, who have vowed myself to my profession, to duty and to glory? Heigh ho! I will just go and see Colonel Manwaring, and stay till the little flirt has gone back to her school."

These reflections were broken in upon by seeing Anna in close conversation with Lady Mansford, to whom, at that lady's request, Mr. Michelson had introduced her and her sister. Chatham was talking to Miss Colville, and seemed just as devoted to her as he had been to Anna. Indeed he had the power of making himself agreeable to most people, from an unaffected frankness of manner that nature had given him, and that always finds its way to the heart. Kind, courteous, and gentlemanlike, Chatham pleased where many a more shining and talented man would have failed. Nelson, for instance, had five hundred times more of character than he had, and really a much better

temper, with perhaps more of genuinely refined feeling, but he sank into insignificance beside his more brilliant friend. Chatham possessed some of his father's faults, with much of the amiability of his mother. He was hot-headed and passionate, but generous and forgiving. He had a good share of talent, but neglected its cultivation in his pursuit of the less worthy acquirements of mere agreeability and the art of pleasing. He was selfish too, and although he would not have done a dishonourable action for the world, he had not the stern principle within him which could make him sacrifice personal ease, pleasure, or amusement, to a simple sense of duty. He and his father were continually at variance on account of his extravagant habits, which unfortunately were in the main too like Mr. Michelson's own extravagant habits, but uncounteracted by little meannesses. The more you knew of Chatham, the more you liked him, but the less you esteemed him; whereas the more you knew of Nelson, the more you must of necessity esteem him, whether you liked him or not.

"Well, Burford, shall we have the chair out?" asked Chatham, when he perceived Nelson.

"What does Miss Colville say?" asked Nelson.

"Everybody here seems most anxious for it," said Louisa, "but I really think it is going to rain: look at the sun, how dim and cloudy it is!"

"Do you think it will rain, Captain Burford?" asked Chatham.

"Yes, cats and dogs before an hour is over. It is thawing already, and the sooner we make our way across the ice the better."

"May I ask who that young lady is?" asked Lady Mansford of Anna, pointing to Miss Colville, just as Nelson came to announce the thaw.

"Miss Colville, a schoolfellow of mine."

"Dear me! is she any relation of the Indian Colvilles?"

"She is a daughter of Colonel Colville, who is in India."

"Then I knew her aunt years ago: will you introduce me?"

Anna heralded Lady Mansford across, and introduced her to Louisa. Aunt Betsey stood near, and Lady Mansford suddenly recollected that she had known her also years ago, but that she had neglected her under change of circumstances. She was about to speak, when Aunt Betsey, with a very slight and dignified curtsey, walked away. Anna felt disgusted, as she longed to be intimate with that charming Lady Mansford.

A thick haze was gathering on all sides. The sun looked through it sulkily, and withdrew all his bright glances from the ice, as if he thought he

had courted it long enough without meeting any answering warmth. The fog was more successful, for he drew forth a slight moisture in return for his pressing overtures. The faces of the ladies were beginning to look blue, and even Anna felt chilled. With one consent they all resolved to leave the moor, and general was the regret that the frost was breaking up.

"I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you at my house, Miss Colville," said Lady Mansford.

"Thank you," replied Louisa, "but my stay in the country will be short, and I am dependent on my friends."

"I will send for you, and send you back, and shall be delighted if the Miss Burtons would accompany you," said Lady Mansford.

"It is scarcely safe to remain here longer," interrupted Mr. Michelson; "they say the ice is giving way."

"I will write to you, Miss Colville," said Lady Mansford; "good bye." And the party separated as quickly as they could, Mr. Michelson attending Lady Mansford and the heiress, his son accompanying the Burtons.

It was so dangerously slippery that the gentlemen were compelled to assist the ladies. Chatham and Anna were arm-in-arm immediately, and Nel-

son and Miss Colville. Jessie had as much as she could do to keep Captain Burford and Aunt Betsey on their legs.

The first couple went on merrily enough, in spite of Anna's slight lameness, and the treacherous ice.

"And how do you mean to kill this long evening?" asked Chatham; "winter in the country is dreadful without a houseful of people; but then you are a houseful to be sure, and a merry one."

"We are going to the Grange as soon as we get home," said Anna.

"How I wish I was going too!" sighed Chatham.

"I am sure my uncle would be very glad to see you," said Anna, "and it is not very far from the Hall."

"I promised to call on him about the election, by the bye: how thoughtless of me, to have forgotten! I will do so on my way home. What time do you think you shall be there?"

"About four or five at the latest."

CHAPTER XII.

"Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity,
Quips, and cracks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides."—MILTON.

I SUPPOSE it is needless to say that when the party from Fairfield reached the Grange in their covered car, they found Captain Michelson there, talking politics with Farmer Barnard, and looking anxiously out of the window in expectation of the arrival. It must not be imagined that all our friends went in the said car. Though a roomy and convenient vehicle, it would not hold the united forces of Burtons and Burfords. Captain Burford had hired a fly for himself and Charles, in which Tiny and Aunt Betsey also went. Uncle Timothy had made such a point of Aunt Betsey's being of the party, that for the first time in her life she condescended to become Mr. Barnard's guest, and the flutter of

feelings in the breast of that worthy man was quite overpowering.

"Don't go, Mr. Chatham," said Farmer Barnard,—"I beg your pardon, Captain Michelson. If you can put up with rough fare and a farmhouse, and enjoy country games, we shall all be glad of your company, I am sure."

"Oh, thank you!" replied Chatham, feeling guilty as Anna looked at him, "I shall be delighted."

"You must have tea for lunch, and supper for dinner," said the farmer.

It would be impossible to describe all the fun and laughter of that evening at the Grange. Even Aunt Betsey relaxed somewhat from her stiffness, and smiled when the fat farmer actually bent his knee before her in redeeming a forfeit, and thus tacitly confessed that she was the lady of all others that he admired the most. Who could tell all the flirtations, palpitations, and associations of those Christmas games and their attendant forfeits?—how old-fashioned mirth and antiquated jests played at hide-and-seek with propriety; how men and women forgot the punctilios of society, and romped like children; and how all were more inclined to love and friendship at the end than at the beginning of the evening. There is Farmer Bar-

nard, a great living joke, cracking his sides with laughter at the two little Skinners, who have been asked to meet Tiny, and who are initiating her into the mysteries of "Truckle the Trencher."

"You are Lily of the Valley," says one; "and when somebody twirls the trencher and says 'Lily of the Valley!' you must run and pick it up, and then truckle, and call another flower; and if you do not catch it before it is flat on the ground, you will have a forfeit."

"Now all say your names," says Jessie, standing in the middle of the room, holding a wooden trencher in her hands.

"Magnolia," says Aunt Betsey, ambitious even in her amusements.

"What?" asks Tiny gently of little Skinner.

"Mag–no–liar," is the reply: "a great fine flower."

"Poppy," screams Farmer Barnard.

"Rose," says Anna.

"Very appropriate," whispers Captain Michelson, who is seated by her side, and is overheard by Nelson, standing near.

"Myrtle," calls Chatham, and adds quietly, "The rose wants the myrtle to make it perfect;" and Anna blushes, whilst Chatham gazes on her admiringly.

"I will have a wild flower," says Louisa Colville, "Forget-me-not."

"So will I," exclaimed Pynsent, answering that gentle, blue-eyed, lovable Forget-me-not: "Water-lily."

"Water-lilies ought to shelter Forget-me-nots," says Captain Burford maliciously; "so, Water-lily, take care of that delicate Forget-me-not."

"Camomile-flowers," says Uncle Timothy drily, and causes a great laugh.

"Lily-of-the-Valley," says Tiny.

"Fuchsia and Geranium," the two little Skinners.

"Coxcomb," cries Captain Burford.

"Very inappropriate," says Jessie; "and now Nelson, it is your turn."

"I don't know any more flowers," says Nelson carelessly.

"Cowslip,—be 'Cowslip,'" suggests Jessie; "do you remember the huge tisty-tosties we used to make long ago?"

"Cowslip be it, little Violet," said Nelson, recollections of boyhood and cowslip-gathering with Jessie rushing through his mind. "And you?"

"You have named me 'Violet,'" says Jessie; "and now we will begin the game; remember, first, that when any one calls 'Flowers!' everybody must change places, or forfeit."

The servants are seen peeping in at the door, and Jessie begs them to come in, and sit down by the door, and see the fun.

Jessie truckles the trencher capitally, and calls "Coxcomb!"

Up jumps "Coxcomb," and just catching it in time, twirls, and shouts, "Lily-of-the-Valley!"

Lily calls, "Poppy!" and that luckless flower slips, and slipping, knocks down the trencher.

"A forfeit! a forfeit!" and Poppy pulls forth a large clasp-knife, twirls, and shouts, "Magnolia!"

Magnolia glides across the room, takes the trencher between her finger and thumb daintily, truckles, and cries "Flowers!" gliding herself into a vacant seat, and putting all the people in motion.

Strange that Chatham finds himself again by Anna in their new seats, and Nelson is the forfeited one, without a seat, in the middle of the room.

"Rose!" he cries.

Rose darts across like a star, and summons "Myrtle." Myrtle calls "Violet;" Violet invokes "Camomile-flowers," who fairly falls down amid roars of laughter; Camomile-flowers calls "Forget-me-not," who wishes to call "Water-

lily," but changes, and says "Flowers!" Geranium is forfeited, who is delighted to have out "Poppy," who screams for "Fuchsia," and is by Fuchsia screamed for again.

And so goes on the game, young and old playing with equal enjoyment, and Farmer Barnard and Captain Burford finding themselves in greater request than all the rest put together. The forfeits are given into the care of Charles, who looks on in his armchair by the fire, and when there is a sufficient number, he cries them.

"Here is a thing, and a very pretty thing, what shall the lady do to redeem it again?" he asks Nelson, who is kneeling at his feet.

"Kneel to the handsomest, bow to the wittiest, and shake hands with the one she loves best."

"Anna's forfeit," says Charles.

"It used to be, 'kiss the one she loves best,' in my younger days," says Farmer Barnard.

"The rising generation are too fine for that," says Captain Burford; "I don't suppose they ever heard of kissing."

Anna kneels gracefully to Captain Michelson, bows to Nelson, and pauses, with her finger on her mouth, to consider. The two young men feel nervous.

"No relations, Miss Anna," says Captain Bur-

ford; "they are not allowed in forfeits, for everybody knows that one loves one's relations."

"Very well," said Anna, running round behind the Captain, and imprinting a kiss upon his cheek, over his shoulder. "Now never say again that the rising generation do not know what kissing means."

"You monkey! I don't believe you," says Captain Burford.

"Here's a thing, and a very pretty thing, what shall the gentleman do to redeem it again?"

Anna peeps, and sees Captain Burford's gold snuff-box.

"Dance the Sailor's Hornpipe," she says.

"Come, Coxcomb," exclaimed Charles, holding up the box.

"I'll pay you off, you gipsy! but you shall not get my snuff-box," says the Captain, and sets to work with all his heart, and dances a regular sailor's jig, which Jessie hums for him.

"Bravo! bravo!" cry the whole party, as he falls panting at Charles's feet, to cry the next forfeit.

"Spell 'Opportunity' in the corner with Mr. Barnard of the Grange," he says.

"Aunt Betsey!" exclaims Charles, smothering a laugh.

Aunt Betsey declines the forfeit with dignity,

but Farmer Barnard, forgetful of his usual shyness, rises, and insists on conducting her to the corner. She gives her hand, and they walk slowly thither.

"You are not of the rising generation, remember, Barnard," says the Captain.

Barnard did remember, and as Aunt Betsey deliberately spelt "Opportunity," meditated the insult of a salute; but his courage failed him, as he gazed on Aunt Betsey's frigid demeanour, and he could only lead her to her seat again.

"I should not have believed that of *you*," says Captain Burford.

Various were the forfeits cried. Tiny had to kiss Captain Michelson, which she was a long time resolving to do; Chatham to dance a reel with the two prettiest young ladies in the room, which he performed with Anna and Louisa Colville; Jessie to sing a song; Pynsent to make himself agreeable to the ladies—which he did, by paying them the most outrageous compliments; and Nelson to repeat a portion of Shakspeare to some young lady present. He performed his part charmingly, by addressing the two sisters in the beautiful passage from the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' that begins—

"We, Hermia, like two artificial gods," etc.

"Upon my word, Nelson, you must have been on the Indian stage," said Captain Burford, looking proudly on his son, and feeling pleased at his joining Jessie with her lovelier sister, in his address.

And so the evening sped; the game was changed, and various others succeeded,—quiet ones, that Charles could join in. They had "What's my thought like?" and "How, when, and where?" and "Cross questions and crooked answers," and last of all, "I love my love," which caused much mirth. Pynsent, who was undeniably the quiet wag of the party, managed so that Farmer Barnard should have the letter "B," and he began, "I love my love with a B, because she is beautiful; I hate her because she is bilious; I took her to the sign of the Bear, and treated her to blackberries: the ugliest part about her is her bonnet, the prettiest her—her—beauty; her name is—" here he paused. "Betsey," whispered Pynsent; "Burton," murmured Captain Burford; and between the two the good farmer was quite abashed. "Her name is Betsey," at last he said, and she lives at—" "Bairfield," muttered Captain Burford; "Barnstaple," boldly said Mr. Barnard.

Then it came to Chatham to love his love with an R, and he said her name was "Rose," which caused Anna to blush; and thus the varied feelings

of poor human nature were excited by this game of forfeits.

Just before supper came Mr. Skinner, an unheard of honour, and one that might well have been dispensed with, not only by his acquaintances, but by his children, who looked blank at the apparition.

"What do you think of Jessie's intended?" asked Pynsent of Louisa Colville.

"Horrid!" was the reply.

Jessie was busy seeing about supper, which was laid in the large hall, and consisted of every variety of Christmas fare. When they sat down to it, Mr. Skinner did actually manage to get next to Jessie, who had taken a small Skinner on the other side. It was very odd that she never sat beside any one she cared to be next to. Again Aunt Betsey was voted to the head of the table, and she had never been so agreeable before. Truly heart-gaiety is infectious. There was Anna again, between the two soldier beaux, dividing her favours, like a little coquette as she was; and Charles managed to sit up to supper —he was evidently getting stronger.

After supper, when abundance of wine, and something stronger than wine, contained in a set of small decanters, was on the table, songs were proposed. Jessie and Charles sang duets beautifully, and they were at once called upon to begin the concert. Charles said his voice was weak, but

he would do his best. They sang the fine duet from the Midsummer Night's Dream, "I know a bank,"—fine, both in poetry and music; everybody was delighted. No accompaniment could have improved that harmonious blending of voices. Then, according to custom, Jessie called for a song, and she named "Captain Michelson." He had a very fine cultivated voice, and sang without requiring to be pressed, "Drink to me only with thine eyes," which elicited much applause. He called on Anna, but she could not sing without an accompaniment; neither could Miss Colville. Aunt Betsey was his next attempt. She simpered, and declined, and said she had given up singing; but as everybody knew she used to sing, they would let her have no peace until she consented to try. Her voice was still good, and, to the great prejudice of Farmer Barnard's peace of mind, she sang a song that he used to hear her sing when in the zenith of her charms and cruelty. It was sadly at variance with her character, but singers are not in the habit of stopping to consider whether they themselves practise what they sing. It was called, "The Friend and the Lover," and, in very sensible language, declared that the lady was waiting until she could find a true, kind, clever, and courteous mate. The *refrain* of each verse was—

"Nor e'er will I marry till the one I can find
Where the friend and the lover are equally join'd."

Farmer Barnard chimed in loudly in this chorus, and highly approved the sentiment.

Then followed a wonderful Christmas carol, drawled out, in character, and as a duet, by Farmer Barnard and Pynsent, which made everybody present die of laughing, and wonder whether either uncle or nephew possessed any of the family talent for music.

Captain Burford sang a good sea-song with all his heart, and of course it was 'Cease, loud Boreas, blustering railer.'

Nelson was no great singer, but he used, in his boyhood, to sing with Jessie, so he was loudly called upon for one of the old ditties.

"No song, no supper!" cried Farmer Barnard, forgetful that supper was over.

"Well, Jessie, you must sing with me," said Nelson. "The only song I remember is 'The Cot beside the Lime-tree.'"

"Very well," said Jessie, who sat opposite Nelson, and had been rather pained by his lack of attention during supper: he had not even asked her to take wine with him.

They began the following song, in which Jessie rather supported Nelson than actually sang with him, making a pretty second to his tenor:—

THE COT BESIDE THE LIME-TREE.

A pleasant cot shall ours be,
My Dora dear, my Dora dear;
Down yonder by the Lime-tree
Its walls we'll raise, its thatch we'll rear,
And round about the windows
We'll plant the rose and vine,
And up the little chimney
The ivy shall entwine;
And flowers shall blow,
And herbs shall grow,
When thou art mine, art mine.

A merry cot shall ours be,
My own true love, my own true love;
For in the flowering Lime-tree
The birds shall sing, the bees shall rove;
And cheerful through the garden
The little stream shall play,
Where shining trout and minnows
Shall dance their lives away;
And thou shalt be
As glad with me,
As they, my love, as they.

A peaceful life shall ours be
When thou'rt my wife, when thou'rt my wife,
Beneath the fragrant Lime-tree,—
No bitter words, no angry strife;
Content shall crown our labour,
And love shall grace our cot,
Thy smiles shall make our homestead
A rich sunshiny spot;
And we shall bless,
In cheerfulness,
Our lot, our happy lot.

That simple song did Nelson good. Much of disquiet and jealousy had been rankling in his mind all that evening. Jessie's sweet voice, joining with his own, seemed to enter gently into his heart and calm it; and when he glanced across at her, and saw the modest, blushing face, and the eyes cast down, as if upon the hands in which the little girl next her had caressingly slipped hers, all the affections of his deep, true heart swelled up as of old, and again flowed over the hard stones and pebbles that had been laid bare at its bottom. He inwardly said that if, in the whole world, there was one human being true, pure, and good, it was Jessie. Her voice faltered a little once or twice, and he fancied that he saw something like moisture pressing through the soft eyelashes. When she looked up, and met his glance, and blushed and smiled, he was quite convinced there was a tear in her eye, and he asked himself whether old associations had forced it there.

When the praises and thanks of the party ceased, and they had begun to ask for more songs, Nelson said quietly, "Jessie, may I have the pleasure of taking wine with you?" and as she, in the words of Chatham's song, "drank to him only with those eyes," he thought them the dearest and best he had ever looked into.

It is a pity that good old sociable custom of pledging one another over the wineglass should be nearly extinct; quite so, indeed, in the fashionable world. Almost the last remnant of the ancient hospitality of our forefathers, it is ill replaced by the "Wine, Sir?" or "Wine, Ma'am?" of the dandified footman behind your chair. There was a friendliness in the glance, nod, and smile, that helped to break the ice of a stiff, frigid dinner party, or to warm into conversation the shy, silent pair who had been sitting side by side and exhausting all their stock of monosyllables before. Better still, it sometimes cemented friendship or awakened love, or made eyes bright that had been dull. Not unfrequently it reconciled divided lovers, by loosening the bands of hard jealousy or unkindness that had fastened round the heart, but which the glance of fellowship rent in twain; or it was the first symptom of reconciliation between friends or acquaintances at variance from slight, silly causes; or it helped to make mere acquaintances friends. On the present occasion it made Jessie glad and gay, and Nelson himself again.

It was a fine, clear, frosty, moonlight morning when the party found themselves on their way homewards. The fly went on swiftly before, and its inmates had not much to say for themselves,—

they were so tired and sleepy; but around the car hovered all kinds of emotions. Was there ever a car that was full of young people of both sexes, returning from a Christmas party, around which, or in which, various emotions did not dwell? Pynsent was driving, and Anna proposed to Louisa Colville to sit on the driving-seat with him, that they might look at the "beautiful, exquisite moon." Louisa consented, and they put Pynsent between them. This arrangement enabled Captain Michelson to ride by Anna's side, and reining in his good horse, to watch the moonbeams flickering about her. Uncle Timothy was dozing inside, and Nelson sat by Jessie. They took Mr. Skinner and his children as far as their entrance-gate, and were not sorry to bid them good-night. Mr. Skinner actually pressed Jessie's hand in his bony fingers as he got out of the car, and the pressure thrilled painfully through her nervous system. The thrill passed away however, as thrills usually do, and she soon found herself joining Nelson in the duet, 'Flow on, thou shining river,' which he was humming in the moonlight. Conversation ceased, and all the young people joined to make the night musical, by uniting their voices in song. 'Meet me by moonlight,' 'Oh no, we never mention her,' 'The Soldier's Tear,' 'Alice Gray,' and many other sim-

ple ballads of the period, were sung in chorus, and gentle, pleasant thoughts and feelings were inspired by the strains.

The threatened thaw had not continued, but Frost cast his white garment over the earth. The hedges were hung with icicles that rivalled the diamonds pendent from the ears of an Eastern princess, or the jewels studding her garments. Not a cloud fell on the placid face of the moon, that gazed, like a tender mother, on the sleeping earth, and converted all her night-gear into silver tissue. Each star seemed a spirit, each blade of grass a bright fairy worshiper, each trembling withered leaf a winter firefly. Clearly rang the music through the frosty air; and as Jessie glanced at the sky, and saw those wonderful orbs of eternal light looking down upon them, she thought of the worlds unseen by mortal eye, and of their unknown inhabitants. She sank into a train of pious meditation, that induced her, when asked to begin another song, to choose 'The Happy Land,' with the closing verse of which they reached Fairfield.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Can it be flattery, to swear those eyes
Are Love's eternal lamps he fires all hearts with?
That tongue the smart string to his bow? those sighs
The deadly shafts he sends into our souls?
Ah! look upon me with thy spring of beauty."

JOHN FLETCHER.

"I AM sure I could make those wreaths best," said Jessie to Anna and Louisa Colville, who were torturing hollyberries and snowberries into all kinds of shapes.

"Do try, dear!" said Anna, throwing down a wreath that she had in her hands.

"You had better go and dress the while," said Jessie, "or we shall be late, and Captain Burford hates anybody to be a minute behind time."

"Oh, pray let me help you!" said Louisa Colville, "we shall finish them quicker together; and Anna can go and dress first, so as to be ready to help us."

Off went Anna, nothing loath, and the wreaths progressed famously under Jessie's neat, tasteful

fingers. The one of ivy and snowberries was soon completed, and then followed that of ivy and holly. Tiny stood by, to thread the needles, and pick out pretty bunches from amongst the mass of evergreens that lay upon the table.

"I hope your brother will not see us," said Louisa. "He will laugh at our vanity, and I should never have the courage to wear the wreath afterwards."

"There!" exclaimed Jessie, holding up the red and green chaplet, "that will become Anna very much. I have mixed a few arbutus berries in it, and they show out famously amongst the green."

"And what are you going to wear?" asked Louisa Colville.

"Oh, nothing!" laughed Jessie: "fancy me, a steady old housekeeper and farmer, sporting wreaths of flowers!"

"Then you shall wear this little bunch of laurestinus, just to please me," said Louisa, holding a spray against her brown hair.

"Oh yes, if you please!" said Tiny, "it looks so well. You cannot think how pretty you look, Jessie."

"We must go and dress now," said Jessie, taking up the wreaths and going upstairs.

I dare say my lady readers would like to know

what these young damsels wore at their first public dance; for Captain Burford was to give a dance that night, and everybody was to be there. Jessie and Anna wore simple white muslin dresses, but Anna's was ornamented with red ribbons, whereas Jessie wore no ornaments of any kind. Louisa Colville sported a pale blue net over a smart satin slip, and as she was remarkably fair, it became her well. The snowberry wreath wound prettily round her braided hair, and the blue eyes, and soft pink and white cheeks looked very lovable beneath. Upon Anna's small head and jet-black hair the holly and ivy sat superbly, lighting up her sparkling beauty, and giving her the air of some proud, beautiful Diana crowned with flowers.

"Oh, Anna, you look so beautiful!" said Tiny, throwing her arms round her, and gazing with intense admiration on her face.

Anna looked in the glass, and knew that the child spoke the truth.

"To please me!" said Louisa entreatingly, holding up the laurestinus.

"Well, I shall cut you all out, if I do," said Jessie, sitting down, whilst Louisa inserted the flowers tastefully.

"I would rather stay with Charles," said Tiny, "if I might; and I am so afraid of spoiling my best white frock."

"Captain Burford would be annoyed if you were not to go," said Anna; "and we will get the frock washed nicely before you go back to London."

The frock was very plain, and rather old fashioned.

"Let her wear this pink sash for once," said Louisa Colville, bringing one of hers from a drawer.

The pink sash was tried, and looked so well, that the child was permitted to wear it, and, to complete her smartening, Louisa put a sprig of laurestinus into the sash.

"All ready for conquest?" said Pynsent, peeping out of his room as they walked down the passage, and then following at a distance.

"You have been quite as long adorning as we have been," said Anna, tossing round her head.

"Adorable beauty!" cried Pynsent, sinking on one knee in the passage, and putting his hand on his heart.

Anna ran back and tried to push him down, but failed.

"Well, Aunt Betsey," said Pynsent when they reached the parlour, "you and I shall have more than we can do to *chaperon* these four young ladies. Indeed I think I shall have it all to myself, for you look as young as any of them."

Certainly Aunt Betsey did look very young at a little distance.

Pynsent had never been a ball-goer, and had rarely before seen young ladies in full dress, therefore Louisa Colville appeared quite a star to him. He condescended to look at her twice—a compliment he rarely paid to a lady—and to assure them all that they really looked very well; adding aside to Anna, that he had once paused before a shop-window in London, to look at a very fine collection of lovely dolls, and that they were exactly curled and furbelowed like them.

Nevertheless Pynsent was very proud of his "dolls," when, with Miss Colville by his side, he entered Captain Burford's large dining-room, cleared out for dancing. As this party was in honour of Nelson's return from India, everybody was invited, and the room was already half-full of guests. It was soon quite full, and dancing began.

Anna and Louisa Colville were unquestionably the belles of the evening; and when it was understood that the latter was the daughter of a Colonel and an heiress, partners multiplied upon her to such an extent, that she did not know how to dance with them all. Pynsent was tormented to death for introductions; and in his amusement and amazement at the *furore* of the beaux, he said

the most impossible and improbable things about her.

"What is her name, Burton?" asked one.

"Colville," replied Pynsent.

"Who is she?" inquired a third.

"One of the great Colvilles of Castle Colville, in the County Clare; her ancestor was Baron de Colville."

"Has she so much money?" demanded a fourth.

"Enormous wealth, I believe,—not only from her father, the Colonel, but from no end of uncles and aunts."

"How much should you say she was worth?" asked a young curate, who, having only a hundred a year and very moderate expectations, was on the look-out for money.

"One never knows those Indian fortunes. I did hear how many millions of lacs of rupees, but I really have forgotten."

"She is remarkably pretty," said the young curate. "Who is that beautiful girl near her? she is really splendid!"

"It is lucky you said so," replied Pynsent; "she is my sister. I thought you had met her before."

"Ah, yes! some time ago. Will you do me the favour to introduce me?"

"To which?" asked Pynsent.

"Oh! to Miss——the heiress, if you please."

Miss the heiress was engaged; and the curate retired disappointed, to seek out the next wealthiest young lady in the room. In the course of the evening, however, he managed to dance with Miss Colville, fell violently in love with her, and almost proposed for her. Louisa was astonished and flattered by her vast "success," but little knew how much of it she owed to Pynsent's account of her wealth. Of course Anna's admirers were of the more disinterested class, as everybody knew she had no money; but then they were literally worshipers. She had the power of fixing by her beauty, and of then putting the *coup de grâce* by the most fascinating, tantalizing manners. Captain Michelson seemed to have no eyes but for her. True, he danced with others; admired Louisa Colville; said she was thoroughly well-dressed—the best dressed girl in the room: still Anna was the magnet. Nelson too,—the grave, yet changeable Nelson,—was almost as much devoted; and whilst, as in duty bound, making himself agreeable to all the guests in turn, he found himself looking at her, thinking of her, and talking to her continually.

"And are you really going to my aunt's, to

bury yourself in Wales?" asked Chatham, in one of the pauses of the dance.

"I suppose so, if she likes," said Anna, colouring; "I have not heard yet."

"But do you like it?" asked Chatham.

"Of course I do not," was the reply; "I hate it; but it is better than Miss Primmerton's."

"But why need you do either?"

"I believe I have no choice. But pray do not talk of such odious things now; I want to forget it, until I am obliged to remember it. Let me be an independent Burton as long as I can."

The proud girl drew herself up and glanced round as she said this, as if the Burtons were, and always had been, the first people in the world.

Chatham admired the pride, and inwardly declared that she should never have that fine spirit, as he called it, crushed, if he could help it.

"What a conceited girl that Annabella Burton is!" said Miss Sandford to Miss Smith, two young ladies who were sitting as wallflowers during the quadrille in question.

"She looks as if it was a condescension for her to dance at all," said Miss Smith; "she, too, as poor as a church mouse, and going to be a governess!"

"She will soon have her conceit taken out of

her," said Mrs. Smith; "I wonder Mr. Michelson allows his son to be so attentive to her."

"So do I," said Mr. Dart, a good-natured old gentleman who was sitting near, "if he can help it. But young men will be attentive to handsome girls—and she is a handsome girl. I do not think she is exactly conceited, but she looks proud. That is the worst of those finishing London schools—they put such absurd notions into people's heads."

"Will you give me that piece of myrtle?" said Chatham, as the quadrille concluded, and Anna picked up a sprig that had fallen from her bosom.

"Of what value could it be to you?" asked Anna, looking, or pretending to look, astonished.

"I assure you I should prize it beyond anything in the world," said Chatham enthusiastically.

"What! if it came from your aunt's future governess?" said Anna carelessly, giving the myrtle as she spoke.

Chatham looked at her reproachfully, but met such a proud, half-contemptuous glance, that he scarcely knew what to make of her.

"If Miss Annabella Burton is to be my aunt's future governess," said Chatham, "both my aunt and her nephew will, I am sure, value whatever comes from her."

"Is she kind, then—and not overbearing—and

will she treat me like a lady—and not—not—?" said Anna, recovering her natural manner, and speaking hastily.

"As she is a lady, and you are a lady, I do not know what else she could do," said Chatham.

Anna looked grateful, and, as the dance was over, walked towards Jessie, who was sitting with her Uncle Timothy, anxiously watching her, and feeling uncomfortable at the earnest and animated conversation that she was carrying on with Captain Michelson. Uncle Timothy had been confiding to her his fears that Anna was too volatile rightly and conscientiously to be made a governess; and Jessie was dreading the temptations that must surround one so evidently and universally an object of admiration. Scarcely was Anna seated by her side, when Pynsent came up, accompanied by Louisa Colville, with whom he had been, contrary to custom, walking through a dance. Be it said, that Pynsent rather eschewed dancing upon principle: not exactly religious principle, but because he chose to consider it beneath the dignity of the lords of the creation.

"I am requested," he said, bowing to Anna, "to beg my beautiful and accomplished second sister to favour the company with a song. Everybody knows that you have learnt of Signor Squallini, and we are all anxious to know how he

teaches. Miss Colville has kindly consented to assist in a duet, and we are all on the very points of the horns of expectation."

"How can we sing," said Anna, "when the piano is not in this room?"

"The company will feel themselves honoured by going into the drawing-room," said Pynsent, "where I have caused to be placed the little secret roll of music that I found in the car, and thus have stopped up all avenues of escape."

"Pynsent, you are too provoking," said Anna.

"Don't say so, now; because if you had not meant to sing, you would not have brought your music," replied Pynsent.

"We are going to have some music," here broke in Nelson; "will you all come into the drawing-room? Miss Colville, I hope you will be so kind as to sing—and you, Miss Annabella."

They all followed Nelson into the drawing-room, where there was a somewhat antiquated piano, that had belonged to his mother. A young lady was already singing, much to the delight of our two belles, who wished to avoid beginning. Their turn came, however, and they sang an Italian duet, Anna taking the first. They had been well taught, and had good voices,—Anna's was, indeed, very good, and her singing sufficiently finished for a

young lady of eighteen. As she was not nervous, she created quite a sensation, whilst poor Louisa, who was fairly frightened to death, broke down. Captain Michelson came to the rescue, and taking up the second—the duet was the "Deh con te" of Norma—he and Anna finished it triumphantly together. Mr. Michelson came into the room at the conclusion, and, with the air of a connoisseur, applauded. He was passionately fond of Italian music, and sang well himself. Turning over some other duets that lay on the piano, he asked Anna to sing one with him. She did so, and sang it well. As not many of the young people cared much about Italian singing, most of them gradually dropped off to the dancing-room, and left few behind, except our friends, the Burton and Michelson set: we include Nelson therein. Louisa Colville played the accompaniments, and Anna sang, now alone, and now with Mr. Michelson or Chatham, all the songs she had brought with her. Mr. Michelson was delighted—so was his son—so was Nelson, though in reality he preferred Jessie's voice and style of singing to Anna's. Then Chatham sat down at the piano, and struck a few chords. His father begged him to sing. He sang the beautiful little ballad, "Annie Laurie," so well, and with such feeling, that Anna Burton felt

her cheek flush every time that he came to the concluding line—

"And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me doun and dee."

"That must be meant for Anna," whispered Tiny to Jessie, "only her eyes are black instead of blue."

Mr. Michelson overheard the words, and darted a frowning glance upon the child, which melted, however, into one of strange softness, when he met her gentle eye.

"Do you like music?" he said, seating himself by her side, and taking her little hand in his.

"Yes, very much," she replied.

"And which song did you like best?"

"The one you sang with Anna," was the answer of the unconscious flatterer.

"Do you think you should like me, if you knew me?" asked Mr. Michelson, with a strange feeling of anxiety at his heart.

Tiny hung her head.

"Answer, dear," said Jessie; "you need not be afraid, if you tell the truth."

"I think I should," said Tiny timidly; and Mr. Michelson felt real pleasure at the reply.

Whilst Mr. Michelson was talking to Tiny, Jessie glanced across at the piano, and saw a bit

of by-play going on which pained her in more ways than one. Anna was bending her head over a piece of music that she held in her hand, and blushing through the curls that partly shaded her face, as they fell on the music. Chatham, who had finished his song, but was still seated at the piano, was looking up in her face and whispering. Jessie did not hear what he said, but we did. He too had overheard Tiny's loud whisper, and said—

"Yes, the words *were* intended for Anna Burton, though her eyes are black and not blue."

On the opposite side of the piano Nelson was leaning on his elbow, and gazing, partly concealed by the music which intervened, on Anna. As if he heard the words, as he saw the blush, a dark shadow fell on his face, and his brows contracted, as if he were in pain. Jessie knew well, by the stern expression of the mouth, that he was displeased, and suddenly her own cheek grew pale, and her poor heart felt a pang. Nelson hastily left the room, and in a few minutes afterwards Chatham and Anna followed arm-in-arm, engaged for the next waltz. Mr. Michelson's quick eye caught the pair, and he too went to the dancing-room. Pynsent brought a partner for Louisa Colville, and soon the only inmates of the drawing-room were Jessie and Tiny. The former sat down

on an easy chair by the fire, and Tiny on a stool at her feet.

Poor Jessie! This is the first harsh awakening from her life-long dream. True, she may fall back again into the same dream, but never will it be so untroubled and happy as it has hitherto been. To have lived her childhood and early girlhood with Nelson had helped to make those portions of her life pass gently, in spite of the sorrows that obscured it. To have wandered with him in thought through the cities, mountains, and plains of India, had been her dearest pleasure for the last eight years; and to dwell with him for ever at some future time—to share his hopes and fears—his joys and sorrows—to be his trusting, helping friend and comforter, was, she scarcely knew why, the desire of her soul, and had been so ever since she could remember to have formed a wish. But were his thoughts, hopes, and wishes like hers? She did not know. She began to fear not. Oh! Captain Burford, why did you plant in her mind, from infancy, fancies that might never be realized? Why sow seeds of love and hope that never were to blossom?

Captain Burford came to answer for himself. He had missed his dear Jessie, and was searching for her.

"What are you about, Jessie?" he asked coming suddenly upon her in the midst of a long, deep reverie, during which Tiny had absolutely fallen asleep, with her head upon her lap; "what business have you to creep away by yourself here? I expected you to do the honours, as if you were my daughter, which, you know, you are to be; and here—"

"Oh, do not say that, if you please, dear Captain Burford!" said Jessie, feeling much inclined to burst into tears, but restraining herself with a violent effort: "I should be so much obliged if you would not say that again. You must not, indeed you must not."

"The dickens is in the young people, I think," said the Captain, violently stirring the fire, and arousing Tiny by so doing: "here's Nelson, with his face as long as my arm, seriously advising me not to say those kind of things; and now you come, like a tragedy queen, and 'if you please' me, and 'dear' me, and beg me not to do the very thing I like best, and to talk about what has been settled four-and-twenty years. I tell you what it is, Miss, I will talk about it if I like, and have it done, in spite of—"

"Hush! if you please; do—do not,—here is Nelson," interrupted Jessie, with a voice of alarm.

"The deuce take Nelson and all such fools!" said the Captain heartily.

Nelson evidently heard his father's affectionate consignment of him to that enigma "the Deuce," for he looked confused; still he fulfilled his purpose.

"Will you dance the last country dance with me, Jessie?" he said: "we have not danced together tonight."

"More shame for you to say so, under the circumstances," said the Captain angrily.

Jessie hastily put her arm into Nelson's, and walked away.

"Come, little one, you must dance with me," said the good-natured Captain, bearing off Tiny.

Jessie found the dance formed: Anna was dancing with Mr. Michelson, to the chagrin of Chatham and Aunt Betsey, who, by some strange chance, had fallen together. Pynsent and Louisa Colville looked the merriest of our friends, as they stood *vis-à-vis*; but as for Nelson and Jessie they had not a word to say to one another. The former felt that his father had been talking of him in connection with a subject which of all others he dreaded to have named to Jessie; and the latter now knew, to her sorrow, that he disliked its being mentioned. They were no longer the happy, blushing, innocent

children, affianced like a second Paul and Virginia, but the young man and woman, modelled by the world, and changed by the magic wand of passion and shame; and one short week had sufficed to effect all this.

Dances, and all the cross purposes they invariably bring about, must, like everything else, have an end. Captain Burford's had been a very merry one, and many a flushed face was laid upon the pillow that night that would gladly have flushed on a similar party on the morrow. Various were the opinions broached in the covered car as it rolled merrily towards Fairfield.

The following morning came a note to Miss Colville from Lady Mansford, inviting her to pay her a visit at Mansford Park, and begging her to convey an invitation to the Miss Burtons to accompany her. She proposed sending her carriage for them the following week, and hoped nothing would prevent their accepting her invitation, as she was very anxious to make their acquaintance.

"I would rather not go," said Louisa Colville.

"Oh, I should like it of all things!" exclaimed Anna.

"You, my dear!" said Aunt Betsey; "what, visit a person who has almost cut your whole family for years?"

"Oh, that is over and gone, Aunty. Besides, she has been so kind in writing to Lady Georgiana Meredith about me, that I am sure we ought not to think of old times."

"That is all her pride," said Aunt Betsey; "she is very glad to patronize us Burtons."

"Oh, I am sure Lady Mansford is not proud," said Anna.

"Well," interposed Pynsent, "save me from visiting people who think themselves above me, and that they are conferring a great favour by inviting me. I would rather go and spend a week with our old Lizzy Durman; I should feel at home there. What do you say, Jessie?"

"That there is at least as much pride in your view of the matter as in Lady Mansford's, supposing her to be a proud woman, which seems doubtful."

"And are you going to accept her invitation?" asked Pynsent, with a look of horror.

"Certainly not," said Jessie, "but I hope Louisa will: it would be very pleasant for her to become acquainted with some of her mamma's friends before she goes to India."

"I would rather not go, and would not go alone for the world," said Louisa.

"I will go with you," said Anna; "I should

like it so much. Aunty, don't look cross; I am sure you will be glad for me to amuse myself as long as I can!" and she threw her arms coaxingly about Aunt Betsey's neck, who was always gained over by her niece's entreaties.

"I always thought you the proudest girl in the world until now," said Pynsent: "'how are the mighty fallen!'"

"Uncle Timothy," exclaimed Anna, slipping round to her uncle, who was reading the newspaper by the fire, and putting her face between the paper and his face, "do you think there is any want of pride in my going to visit Lady Mansford?"

"Really, my dear, I do not understand those things. Please yourself, and, provided you do nothing wrong, you will please me. What does Niece Jessie think?"

"It is so much a matter of taste, Uncle," said Jessie: "I should not like to go myself, but, as Louisa does not like going alone, and Anna wishes it—"

"Just so, my dear; you are always right. If Miss Colville goes, I think Anna should go. Lady Mansford has been kind in interesting herself about Anna, and she must not show any incivility in return."

Anna gave her uncle a kiss, and looked triumphantly at Pynsent, then said, turning to Louisa—

"It rests with you, Louisa; and the messenger waits for an answer. Will you come upstairs? and we will concoct one."

"Do you really think I ought to go, Jessie?" asked Louisa: "it will be a great bore."

"Perhaps your mamma might wish it, as you are so near Lady Mansford: it would seem unnatural to refuse."

"What am I to say for you?"

"That I am very much obliged, but too much engaged to accept her invitation."

The two friends left the room.

"Anna will be ruined," said Pynsent, "by all the admiration and flattery she is sure to get. Depend upon it, every ball and party she goes to will unfit her more and more for the situation she will fill."

"But, my dear nephew, she is so young," said Uncle Timothy deprecatingly.

"If she is old enough to be a governess, she is old enough to act prudently," said Pynsent, and left the room.

"There is a great deal of common sense in what Pynsent remarked," said Uncle Timothy; "he is

really wonderfully clever and discriminating for such a youth; and as to his profession, I would trust him in cases where I would not trust many an older practitioner."

"He would not like to hear you call him a youth," said Jessie, laughing; "he is nearly three-and-twenty."

"He is very steady and good," said Uncle Timothy; "I had a long conversation with him yesterday upon his future prospects; and although I offered him a share in my practice, as my assistant, he determined to remain in the country on your account."

"He is the best and kindest brother in the world," said Jessie; "but I know how much he longs to live in London, so I hope he will not refuse your kind offer."

"He seems quite to have made up his mind, and such a sacrifice is likely to be of more moral service to him than all the reputation he might gain in London in the next fifty years. Besides, there is a good opening here; and he says he can help you about the farm at the same time. Charles has quite made up his mind to exert himself to get well, and to come to me immediately."

"My dear Uncle," said Charles, who was much better since he had begun to strive against his

weakness, "it is really too much to impose upon your kindness and generosity."

"Not mine, Nephew Charles; you know Brother James has determined that you shall not be a farmer, because he declares that you would be his ruin as well as your own; so he means to pay for your apprenticeship to the arts, and you are only to live with me. Mr. Michelson told him that, when you had studied in England, he would put you in the way of getting to Italy."

"I ought to be thankful to the fever," said Charles, "for bringing about my wishes: 'out of evil springeth good.'"

"I trust it may prove good, my dear boy. There is no doubt that whatever happens to those who earnestly strive to do their duty, and who trust to the Almighty for guidance, is ordered by Him for their eventual good. The most cloudy sky has a sun beneath it, and the rainbow springs out of unpromising moisture."

"Uncle Timothy guilty of similes!" said Anna, entering the room with a note in her hand. "I always thought you had a poetical turn. How I used to long for you when I had to write those horrid themes at school! I used to get on tolerably till I came to the simile, and then I was obliged to make Louisa help me: she has such a turn

for poetry. Here is the note, signed and sealed. I am so glad Pynsent is gone: he is so cross."

"And have you quite decided upon going?" asked Jessie.

"Yes, quite. Louisa thinks, with you, that she ought to go, and she does not mind it, if I accompany her. I shall so like to know that charming Lady Mansford. I hope you do not disapprove of it, Jessie?"

"I think it will be removing you out of your proper sphere, and placing you in an uncertain position," said Jessie.

"One would think we were born beggars, or tradespeople at best," said Anna, with a toss of her head. "I should like to know in what the Mansfords are better than we are?"

"In all that the world generally calls better," said Jessie,—"in fortune, rank, position, and education."

"Not the last however, thanks to Uncle Timothy," said Anna, "and I am sure our family is as good as theirs."

"I should think so," said Aunt Betsey, drawing herself up; "I remember the time when my grandfather and Sir Thomas Mansford's grandfather were like brothers. But nobody thinks of anythi g but money nowadays."

"'Riches make to themselves wings and flee away,'" said Uncle Timothy; "and as to family, we are all children of one common Parent. Our position is that in which God has placed us, and superiority in it is a mere matter of opinion. In reality, he who does his duty best holds the highest rank."

"Oh, my dear Sir!" said Aunt Betsey, "you must admit there are great differences."

"Indeed I do, Madam. I see half the world striving after things that are of no value, and pluming themselves upon what they must shortly leave behind them; and the greater portion of the other half living in idleness and folly: the smallest part, I am sorry to say, is that made up of rational human beings, who are content 'to do their duty in that state of life in which Providence has placed them.'"

"How well you remember your Catechism, Uncle!" said Anna.

"I am glad to hear it, my dear; I hope you will remember it also, and do what it tells you."

"You are all so prosy this morning," said Anna. "Oh! don't sigh and shake your head, darling Jessie: I know what it means. I will be very good and steady by-and-by, you shall see."

CHAPTER XIV.

"There is no life on earth, but being in love;
There are no studies, no delights, no business,
No intercourse, or trade of sense, or soul,
But what is love! I was the laziest creature,
The most unprofitable sign of nothing,
The veriest drone, and slept away my life
Beyond the dormouse, till I was in love."

BEN JONSON.

To the great sorrow of everybody, Uncle Timothy was obliged to leave on Friday. He consented to Tiny's remaining at Fairfield as long as Miss Colville did, as she was already looking all the better for her visit, and beginning to feel at home. She was a shy little dove, but she nestled warmly in Jessie's gentle bosom, and began to love her and Charles very much indeed. Uncle Timothy told Jessie that when he was quite superannuated he meant to come and end his days with her at Fairfield; "When all the rest are married, my dear, and you are in want of a companion," he said. Even Uncle Timothy fell into the general notion

that Jessie would never marry, although she was a most comely maiden, and, as he well knew, would make the best wife in the world. But he could not imagine Fairfield without Jessie. Captain Burford alone remained firm in his resolution, that she should marry his Nelson, whether she would or no: after four-and-twenty years of expectation, he was not going to be disappointed.

Uncle Timothy took his departure, and the two young ladies went to Lady Mansford's, leaving Tiny, in addition to the family party, at home. She and Jessie went about together, feeding poultry, and doing all kinds of useful matters, which delighted her greatly, whilst Aunt Betsey knitted, and Pynsent and Charles pursued their avocations. The former took a surgery in the town, and set about furnishing it with medicines, bottles, and pill-boxes. His friend and former master was thinking of shortly retiring from the profession, and promised to make Pynsent his successor; meanwhile he was to struggle for himself. He intended residing, or rather sleeping, at Fairfield, and practising in the town. This he knew was not so good a plan as to have a residence in the town, but he resolved to do it on Jessie's account, who, he foresaw, would be lonely when they were all gone to their different destinations.

Lady Mansford received her young guests very kindly. Anna was enchanted with her, and Louisa liked her very well. Sir Thomas was a tall, stiff, aristocratic man, with manners as unbending as his person, whilst his wife was the most voluble and agreeable of women. She suited him very well, because he disliked talking, and she had not the least objection to doing double duty.

As Mr. Michelson was a neighbour of the Mansfords, they were on very intimate terms, and Chatham had the *entrée* of Mansford Park whenever he liked. The sly-boots Anna knew that well, or the pride of which Pynsent spoke so warmly would undoubtedly have prevented her from visiting Lady Mansford. Both Mr. Michelson and his son dined at the Park almost daily, and, indeed, passed a portion of most mornings there during the visit of our young damsels. Miss Erskine was also there, and very evidently not averse to the handsome Chatham Michelson, intended for her husband by her friend Lady Mansford, and his father. There was a great deal of fun and gaiety going on in an electioneering way, as Sir Thomas Mansford was one of Mr. Michelson's staunchest supporters; and political subjects brought together a great many agreeable gentlemen, young and old, who were most pleasant additions to the party at Mansford Park.

Amongst these, it is scarcely necessary to say, Anna's beauty and fascination soon became a topic of conversation, and of general admiration. Even Sir Thomas Mansford waxed eloquent in her praise and grew gallant when she was near. She dispersed her smiles and her musical laughter amongst them, as equally, and as unaffectedly, as the most finished coquette could have done; and if she gave a brighter glance to Chatham, or a more friendly smile to Nelson, when he dined at the Park, nobody but the parties concerned knew anything about it. It was no wonder that Nelson and Chatham had both almost fallen in love with her at first sight, for everybody else did the same. Old and young, married and single—I may almost say, male and female—were captivated by the "Fairy of Fairfield," as Mr. Michelson had christened her. A fairy and enchantress, a wild little magician and ogress she undoubtedly was, and her wand was beauty, her incantations were her charms,—her poisons, winning, mirthful words. The "true blue" rosettes and bows she was making for Mr. Michelson's party were seized upon with ardour by his voters, and called the "Anna Burtons" by the wearers, who professed to know them at a glance from those made by any other young lady. She had white and red camellias for her hair, and bouquets of all

kinds and colours showered upon her, as if she were some successful actress; and a successful actress she certainly was—a perfect Jenny Lind, in the simplicity and grace of her performance: for, whether the effect of pure nature or consummate art, everybody acknowledged that her want of affectation was her greatest charm. Her movements, her conversation, her very pride were all spontaneous and unstudied. Had she had more self-control, more restraint of manner, she would have been happier and better, but not one tithe so much admired. Her very faults found favour under cover of her perfections.

To have gained so much of admiration, Anna Burton must have outstaid her intended time at Mansford Park, it will be imagined. She did so. From day to day excuses were made to detain her and Louisa; and, rather to the dislike of the latter, were accepted. Anna ruled Louisa entirely, and had but to express a wish to have it gratified.

During this period, letters were passing between Lady Mansford and Lady Georgiana Meredith, concerning Anna. Lady Georgiana had written to Miss Primmerton, and received a faithful catalogue of her several accomplishments and deserts; rather heightened by Miss Primmerton's desire to do her a service. This, together with Lady Mansford's

favourable mention of her, induced Lady Georgiana to enter into a correspondence with Anna, which finally ended in her engaging her to become her governess. Anna liked the tone of Lady Georgiana's letters, because they were written in a lady-like style, and so did Jessie, to whom they were sent. She evidently did not expect to meet with perfection in a governess or universal accomplishments. Anna wrote in such a humble, simple manner, that Lady Georgiana expressed herself much pleased with her letter, and engaged her at a salary of eighty guineas a year, to be increased, if she remained any length of time with them, to a hundred.

Everybody thought that Lady Georgiana was very liberal; and so, according to general practice and opinion, she was. But she was a gentlewoman and very well off, and she knew that to ensure a good education for her children, she must pay for it, therefore she did not even think of offering less. Moreover she said to herself, "The labourer is worthy of his hire," and it must be pleasanter to wear away young life and health and feelings in the arduous task of tuition, when liberally remunerated and kindly treated, that when grudgingly paid some twenty or thirty pounds a year, and condemned to solitude and incivility therewith.

I am sorry to say, that instead of examining her mind, testing her acquirements, and subduing her pride, with a view to filling an important but subordinate position in life, Anna passed the short interval of holiday that remained to her in fostering an attachment that had begun in vanity, for Chatham Michelson. As she never did anything by halves, of course she was oceans-deep in love. She did not ask herself whether he were suited to her in rank, fortune, temper, or character,—she only saw in him a handsome, fascinating, accomplished officer, the very man she had determined to marry ever since she was a child. She could not help knowing that if she liked him, he liked her twenty times as much; so, almost in accepting Lady Georgiana's offer, she congratulated herself upon the probability of her making that lady's acquaintance in the position of her niece, rather than her governess. Jessie wrote to urge her to come home, that she might prepare her wardrobe for her change of situation; but the spoilt pet returned such florid descriptions of her enjoyment, and such melancholy hints at the change she should soon have to endure, that Jessie could urge it no longer, however much she might feel the want of sisterly affection in Anna's absenting herself from home during those last few weeks.

Everybody was made anxious and unhappy through that unlucky beauty with which nature had endowed Anna; and, to tell the truth, she was not perfectly at ease herself, although she did feel convinced that she was treated like some divinity of another clime by a whole band of admirers. She knew that Jessie was distressed at her not returning; that Pynsent was annoyed at her being where she was; and that Aunt Betsey's pride was irritated on her account, still she could not prevail upon herself to quit the gay scenes she was in, for the dull happiness of Fairfield. Besides, there was to be an election ball, and Mr. Michelson, as its donor, was determined that the two belles should be there, and Lady Mansford was quite as much determined to *chaperon* them. True, Jessie by note set her face against Anna's going; but Jessie not being present to support her note, her influence faded before the united Mansford and Michelson interest, backed by that of a score of beaux.

The ball dress was the greatest difficulty. Anna had no money, and she did not like to name the subject to Jessie, because she knew that she could not afford her one, however simple. Uncle Timothy had told her to write to him before she left home for any additions to her wardrobe; or rather to write to her dressmaker, Madlle. Fourbillon, for

such clothes as she could procure better from her than in the country. Should she write for the simplest of ball dresses, instead of anything else? It would not be quite what Uncle Timothy meant, but he would not mind it. She would write to him by the same post, and explain how matters stood.

She did so. In reply to her letter to Madlle. Fourbillon came the most simple and elegant of white dresses, looped up with gentianellas, and a wreath of that flower for her hair. In reply to the one she wrote to Uncle Timothy, arrived a very gentle reproach, the first she had ever had from him, and therefore very keenly felt. He said that he had not included ball dresses in his list of clothes necessary for her outfit; neither did he think that she would find ball-going a good preparation for the life of study and retirement that lay before her. She was right welcome to the dress, but he feared it would be of little real service to her.

When Anna read the note, she resolved, in a moment, to return the dress to its maker, and to write to Uncle Timothy.

"Then he will have to pay the carriage back in addition to the dress," suggested Louisa; "for of course Madlle. Fourbillon cannot be expected to take it back, and it will be useless to your uncle."

Anna was posed.

"I hate the dress now, and the ball and everything to do with it," she said; "I would not have offended Uncle Timothy for the world."

"But you have promised to go to the ball, and Lady Mansford knows that the dress has come, so what choice have you?" said Louisa. And accordingly to the ball she went.

Michelson Hall was magnificently lighted up and adorned for the occasion. Guests of almost all ranks were present, promised supporters of Mr. Michelson. Amongst them were the officers of a regiment quartered in a not very distant town, who, together with Chatham and Nelson, were in regimentals. This added greatly to the gaiety of the scene, in the eyes of the young ladies at least, and the question was, "Who will dance with the officers?" as is usual in such cases; whilst their question was, "Is there anybody worth dancing with?"

Most of them found Anna well worth dancing with, if one could judge from the succession of military partners she found herself engaged to during the night. Louisa Colville also had her share of red-coats; but she was by nature rather shy and stiff with strangers, so did not get on so well as her more sparkling friend; moreover she was glancing so frequently at the door, as if she

were expecting an arrival, that she was inattentive to the conversation of her partners.

Mr. Michelson complimented Anna on her dress, and expressed himself flattered by her having so tastefully adopted his colour.

"I am disappointed," he said, "that none of your family accompanied you tonight. Surely it is time to let bygones be bygones now."

Anna looked confused. Mr. Michelson led her into a small refreshment room, upon pretence of offering her some lemonade. The room was empty, for dancing was going on. He begged her to sit down, and placed himself beside her.

"Do you think," he said, "that old differences could not be patched up between us? I have heard of family quarrels being put an end to by a marriage: what if we could so manage ours?"

Anna's heart beat quick; she thought of Chatham. Could it be? Could Mr. Michelson be about to probe her feelings for his son? She looked eagerly into his face. Oh, the beauty, the fascination of that look! Mr. Michelson felt it, and returned it with one so admiring that Anna's eyes fell beneath it.

"Now, little Anna," he said, with a tender, pleading voice, that he knew well how to assume, "I must tell you a secret. Ever since I saw you

first, a child, at a dance, at Captain Burford's, I took a great fancy to you. I foresaw that you would be a beauty, and that if you fulfilled your promise, you would be a wife for a prince. I have seen and watched you narrowly for the last three weeks, and my admiration has strengthened, and I have resolved to make you my wife. Shall we just write an affectionate note to my sister-in-law, and tell her we have changed our plans? Will not it be much pleasanter to be mistress of Michelson Hall, than to be a governess? and to rule and instruct me, rather than my nieces? We will do our best to soften Aunt Betsey; she is a very fine woman, but did not exactly suit me; and as to brothers and sister and guardians, they will readily consent, I am sure."

Mr. Michelson paused, and attempted to take the "Fairy's" hand, but scarcely conscious of what she did, she withdrew it. She could scarcely believe that she was Annabella Burton, and that the magnificent Mr. Michelson, and his ten thousand a year, were at her feet. She rose, burning with passion and anger, instead of gratitude. Had he worded his proposal differently, she might have felt at least grateful; but as it was, not even all the splendour of the mansion, its paintings, conservatories, and various beauties, which to an ambitious

maiden always possess charms, could do away with the indignation she felt.

"And do you think, Mr. Michelson," she said, standing before him and speaking rapidly, "that I am a slave, to be bought and sold at will? Are the Burtons fallen so low that one of the daughters of their house shall be wedded even without being wooed, because riches and position are held out to her? Do you think me a baby, that you tell me you will condescend to marry me, even before you have asked me? Do you suppose, that because circumstances compel me to become a governess, that I am to lose my self-respect, my womanly feelings, my very right of choice, and to marry the first man who asks me, even though he be older than my own father was! You might have known women better, had you studied them, than to imagine them so mercenary—so base. At least you should have known a Burton better. Pride, people say, is our characteristic and our bane: for once, at least, it shall be our safeguard. To insult me in your own house! I will leave it at once, even if I walk home."

Hitherto Mr. Michelson had listened in perfect astonishment. He felt alternately annoyed, insulted, angered, and amused, at the way in which his proposal was received. The hint at his being

older than her father had been the most galling; but when she spoke of leaving at once, fear overpowered every other feeling. He knew what the world would say if she did so.

Swallowing his passion, as best he might, he said—

"You are the best judge, Miss Annabella, of the propriety of what you have said; but one thing I beg to insist upon. You cannot leave my house until Lady Mansford does, or you will cause an unnecessary gossip in the neighbourhood. I suppose no young lady is anxious for that kind of *éclat*. Of the rest we may be able to talk again when you are calmer, and have thought over all the advantages of my proposal; but I consider that if any one has been insulted in this house, it is I."

Anna did not condescend to reply to this speech, but with the grace and dignity of a Cleopatra she turned away and left the room. Scarcely had she reached Lady Mansford and Louisa, who were looking for her, than simultaneously Chatham Michelson and Nelson came up, and asked her to dance the next dance with them. Not well knowing what she did, or who was before her, she made a kind of movement of acquiescence, and put her hand on Chatham's arm, who led her towards the quadrille that was forming. Nelson looked hurt

and ruffled, and soon after Louisa, who had watched the proceeding narrowly, saw him leave the room. He did not return again.

"What is the matter?" asked Chatham, when he remarked Anna's agitated manner and flushed face. "Has any one annoyed you? I am sure something must have happened. You left the room with my father. Where is he? Oh, there! just coming in. He looks as if he had been in a passion; I always know when he is irritated, by the large vein in his forehead. Has anything occurred between him and one of the servants in your presence?"

"Nothing," said Anna, rousing herself; "but the heat is so great, and I have danced so much, that I feel rather tired. Is Lady Mansford likely to go home soon?"

"I hope not," said Chatham. "I am afraid you have not enjoyed yourself; still you ought to have done so, for surely you have been of all others

'The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.'"

Anna got through the quadrille with some difficulty, scarcely replying to Chatham's various questions and remarks upon her abstraction. She would have given much to have gone home, but she knew that there was truth and propriety in what Mr. Michelson had said, and she had just self-command enough to walk through the dance.

The fact was, that she was in a real, downright passion.

"I do not think you are well—you look so flushed," said Chatham. "Shall I ask Lady Mansford to allow you to be sent home? The carriage can return for the rest of the party."

"No, I thank you; I would rather remain." For a moment she felt stiff even towards Chatham, as if everybody connected with Mr. Michelson were odious to her.

"Have I offended you?" asked Chatham, anxiously.

"No," was the brief reply.

"Has any one offended you?"

No answer.

"When do you return home?"

"Tomorrow, decidedly."

"When are you going to Plas Ayron?"

"In about a week or ten days, I believe."

"The election is the day after tomorrow, and the following day I am to join my regiment."

"Oh!" said Anna, feeling a sharp pain at her heart.

"Will you allow me to call on you tomorrow afternoon?"

"Certainly, if you feel inclined."

"Will your brother be displeased? He has never invited me to Fairfield."

"I do not know: but I scarcely think he will be at home."

"Can I hope for a private interview with you?"

"It is impossible for me to say."

Another thrill through the throbbing heart, but no visible emotion, save that of haughty, defiant pride.

"I cannot conceive how I can have displeased you."

"I am not aware that you have displeased me."

This brief conversation, carried on during the pauses in the quadrille, partially restored Anna to her self-possession. She saw what Chatham must want with her, and a thousand real and visionary hopes and fears crowded through her mind. She felt that she ought to say something, but knew not how to begin. At last, with a great effort, and the same *hauteur*, she said—

"I do not know whether Pynsent was too proud to ask you to Fairfield, Captain Michelson; but your father has evidently been too proud to bring you there. He probably would not like you to visit us."

"I do not ask my father whom I am to visit," said Chatham, colouring in his turn; "I am old enough now to go where I like, even if I cannot return when I like. I will call on you tomorrow."

Here the final graceful glides and slides of the

quadrille brought to a conclusion a conversation in which much of the happiness or misery of two human beings was involved.

Shortly after Lady Mansford ordered the carriage. Mr. Michelson and Chatham were in attendance, but Anna contrived to secure Sir Thomas's arm, and thus left Mr. Michelson to Lady Mansford, and Chatham to the two young ladies. As they got into the carriage she made Mr. Michelson a haughty bow, which he returned with a look so full of anger that, for the first time, she feared him. No one could have believed that the agreeable, gentlemanlike, clever Mr. Michelson, whose suavity of manner was so remarkable that some of his foreign friends called him *le suave*, could have worn such a frown on his broad, open forehead; or darted such a glance from his large, bold blue eye. But to know Mr. Michelson, as well as many other charming people, we must try to catch him at home. Fortunately for him, for his son, and for his servants, he is scarcely ever at home: the world being his home, and he constantly in a new corner of it, he is rarely to be found in private life. Tomorrow however, when he must be at home for a few hours at least, we will again look in upon him, and see whether we can find out his true character beneath that most perfect suavity which he wears, as—

"The head and front of his offending."

CHAPTER XV.

"Ye gallants bright, I rede you right,
Beware o' bonnie Ann;
Her comely face sae fu' o' grace,
Your heart she will trepan.
Her een sae bright, like stars by night,
Her skin is like the swan;
Sae simply laced her genty waist,
That sweetly ye might span."—BURNS.

THE breakfast at Michelson Hall was late the following morning, and yet Mr. Michelson sat at the table alone. He appeared to have finished, and to be waiting, not very patiently, for the appearance of a companion. He looked gloomy and angry; and although he had the Somersetshire paper open before him, and professed to be reading the opinions of the press upon the forthcoming election, he could scarcely have told any one what those opinions were. At last he got up and rang the bell. The footman answered it.

"Tell Captain Michelson that I have finished breakfast, and am waiting to see him before I go out. Say that I have not a moment to lose, as

I must be off immediately." Mr. Michelson fidgeted about for nearly a quarter of an hour, walked up and down the room, looked out of the window, resumed the paper, muttered some inaudible sentences, and finally rang the bell again.

"Did you give my message to Captain Michelson?" he said to the footman.

"Yes, Sir; he said that he would come as soon as he was dressed."

Chatham entered, as if the second bell had summoned him as well as the servant: it certainly was a most imperative pull. He sat down to breakfast with as much *nonchalance* as he could assume, and began to pour out his coffee.

"I wanted to see you, Chatham, before I go away," began Mr. Michelson.

"Very well, Sir, the carriage is waiting," said Chatham.

"I believe you are to rejoin your regiment the day after tomorrow?" said his father.

"Yes; I just wait for the election, and that is all."

"Did you make any progress last night in the affair that you know I am so anxious about?" Mr. Michelson made this inquiry as gently as he could.

"What affair do you mean?" asked Chatham with assumed indifference.

"That of proposing for Miss Erskine. I am sure you would not be refused, and there is no time to lose, as you must leave so soon: you may see her again today, and certainly will tomorrow."

"I am not aware that I made any progress," said Chatham.

"No progress! you mean, I suppose, that you did not propose."

"I certainly did not."

The vein in Mr. Michelson's forehead began to swell.

"I presume you mean to do so today. You know she is worth about fifty or sixty thousand pounds. Everybody expects that you will marry her; indeed your attentions—"

"My attentions! Nobody can accuse me of attentions, thank heaven; I have been barely civil to her."

Mr. Michelson's vein swelled larger.

"But you are aware, Sir, that I fully intend her for you, and that I have hinted as much to Lady Mansford. Such chances do not occur every day."

"I am sorry you should have mentioned your intentions to Lady Mansford," said Chatham, feeling indignant, "since they are not mine. I do not mean to marry for money, and certainly am not in love with Miss Erskine."

"In love! What nonsense you talk! Who marries for love nowadays? Fortune, rank, convenience, anything but love, which is a word that ought to be rubbed out of the dictionary; it is only fit for babies or fools."

"I suppose you married my mother for love?" said Chatham.

"If I did, I could afford it. But she had rank, which I wanted, and, in bringing me a good connection, brought a fair exchange for my money."

"That kind of bartering does not suit my notions," said Chatham.

"What right have you to have notions, Sir, at your age, and dependent for your very bread upon your father?"

"Upon whom else should I depend?"

"Upon yourself."

"How? My profession will not support me, and there is no chance of bettering myself by a little timely fighting."

"Then marry Miss Erskine, and be your own master."

"And let her support me? I would rather beg than be kept by my wife."

"Why not as well be kept by your wife as by your father?"

"Surely nature gives us a strong claim on a

father, whereas the law alone can make a wife's possessions ours."

"Pshaw! I suppose if Nature teaches you to fall in love and marry, she teaches you to share your wife's fortune."

"But I am not in love, at least not with Miss Erskine, and therefore do not intend to marry her."

"And pray who may you be in love with, if not with Miss Erskine?"

Here Mr. Michelson's vein swelled to its fullest extent, and Chatham also grew red.

"I did not say I was in love with any one," replied the latter.

"But I ask whether you *are* in love with any one—the very expression makes me sick."

"Since you ask me, Father, I must say that I am, and that mine is an attachment that neither time nor circumstances can wear away."

"Oh, of course; all 'attachments' are everlasting. And pray who may be the object of your *attachment?*"

"One that you must yourself acknowledge worthy of it: one whom I have often heard you praise to the utmost extent of praise—Miss Annabella Burford, of Fairfield."

An expression of anger and passion so deep and

fierce overspread Mr. Michelson's whole countenance, that his son was quite alarmed. He had seen his father enraged frequently, but never had witnessed such concentrated ire. It was a long time before Mr. Michelson could sufficiently command his temper to speak, and when he did so, his voice trembled, and he made repeated movements of his hands towards his son, as if he would have fallen upon him, but for mere decency's sake.

"Do you mean to insult me by telling me you are in love with that girl?" he said; "I tell you what, Sir, I would see you starve before I would let you marry her. Dare to propose for her, dare to marry her, and you may both beg your bread before I would give you a farthing: I would withdraw your allowance, and drive you for ever from my house."

Chatham was about to say that his father visited the Burtons, and had actually recommended Annabella to his aunt, but he saw that it was not then the time to do so. He was awed, and feared to reply in any way, either haughtily or humbly, to the harsh words he had heard. He remembered that the man before him, though degraded by fierce passion to the brute, was still his father. Seeing that he was working himself up to increased anger, he merely said—

"Your carriage is waiting, and I have an engagement; perhaps we had better defer this topic to another opportunity," and left the room.

In about a quarter of an hour he saw his father drive off, called for his own horse, and rode towards Fairfield.

Whilst he is on his way thither we will take a peep at some of our other friends, who have also risen to a late breakfast, and are in different ways influenced by the unhappy beauty who has fallen, like some stray planet, amongst them.

Captain Burford and Nelson are silent over the 'Times' and their coffee for a longer space than usual, the Captain being rather inclined by nature to loquacity; he looks, to use a vulgar expression, grumpy, and seems to wait for his son to say something. The beautiful tortoise-shell cat, that sits purring on his knee, is astonished that she does not receive her usual allowance of toast and butter, and finally mounts upon the table, with a view to helping herself out of the cream-jug.

"Down, Pussy!" says Nelson, stroking her sleek coat, and gently lifting her off the table.

"Well," begins the Captain, "I must be off for this confounded voting. I wish there were no such things as elections, or that they could be managed differently."

"I do not think Mr. Michelson will succeed," said Nelson.

"The deuce you don't! and you suppose we shall have a Whig member for Somerset? Then I'll leave the county."

"You had better accompany me upon my tour; it would do you a vast deal of good."

"Tour! where are you going so soon? I should have thought that you would be glad to spend the first six months at home, at least."

"Why, Douglas intends returning to India shortly, and he wishes me to pay him my visit before he leaves home. I believe I must go now, or not at all."

In the Captain's mind the following reflections were passing:—

"All's right! By the time he comes back Anna will be safe in Wales, and then he will be sure to turn his thoughts to Jessie again. Besides, he cannot care so much for Anna after all, or he would not go away just before she is thinking of leaving. Ay, all's right." The last "all's right" the Captain uttered aloud; and from the sudden change in his face and manner, Nelson perceived that he was pleased,—at what, he could not imagine.

"You seem glad to get rid of me, my dear father," said Nelson, feeling mortified.

"No, not exactly that," said the Captain, who never yet knew what it was to conceal a thought, much less an action; "but I have my reasons for wishing you to go now, rather than by-and-by."

Nelson knew precisely what the reasons were, and thought that they were not quite unlike his own. He determined to go from home at once, to avoid the fascinations of one who, he perceived, did not care over-much for him; but he had not any intention of returning to another. Anna Burton, or single blessedness, for him! He might exist in solitary misery, but never wed any one but her. How such a father could have such a son is quite an enigma; unless in this case, as in others, extremes meet. Captain Burford was as open as day, Nelson as secret as night. If the former was glad or sorry, contented or discontented, sick or well, rich or poor, pleased or displeased, everybody connected with him must participate in his humour, and sympathize with him; whereas, if the latter were at the summit of his earthly hopes, or in the depths of sublunary disappointment, nobody knew it but himself. The only confidant he had ever had was Jessie, and in her he could no longer confide: why, he did not confess even to himself.

"Father," he said, after a pause, "you will be

so good as to remember your promise of not attributing any intention of getting married to me. I assure you I do not mean to marry. In short, I do not think it likely I shall ever marry. I am bent on making glory my bride, and feel that the longer I am absent from my professional duties the more distant is my wedding-day."

"My dear son, you know my wishes; and the truth is, I cannot help expressing them. If I try to keep them in at one corner of my mouth, they are sure to burst out at the other; and dang my buttons, Sir, as James Barnard says, if they shall not be gratified in spite of you! Not that I mean to force your inclinations. You may marry glory if you like; but take my word for it, the slut will leave you a-widower, and then you will come back to——you know who, but we never mention names."

Here Captain Burford rose from the breakfast-table, and went to prepare for his electioneering matters, whilst Nelson remained awhile deep in thought. Of course he was thinking of Anna: young men never think of those whom their fathers and mothers request them to think of. His reflections were not agreeable. He thought of her as a consummate little coquette, who was trying to attract not only Mr. Michelson and Chatham,

but everybody else she came near; and the worst of the matter was, she succeeded.

Whilst Nelson slowly rises to prepare to accompany his father, we must look in upon another late breakfast-table, and see in what state of mind the cause of all this uneasiness finds herself.

Anna Burton looks somewhat pale and weary, but excited. She is earnestly declaring to Sir Thomas and Lady Mansford that she must return home immediately after breakfast.

"But, my dear Miss Burton," says Lady Mansford, "Sir Thomas is going to use the carriage, and therefore you have no choice but to stay."

"Oh! if he will only drive us to the turnpike, we can easily walk the rest of the way; or if you will kindly tell the turnpike-gate keeper to send to my sister, she will send at once for us. It is really necessary that I should be at home now."

"But why today?" asked Lady Mansford; "it is cruel to leave Miss Erskine and me alone. All the gentlemen will be away."

"I am very sorry," stammered Anna, looking imploringly at Louisa Colville, "but I do not feel very well."

"Oh! we will nurse you; and tomorrow we shall have a famous party,—all the beaux in the country."

"I think we really ought to go today, Lady Mansford," said Louisa. "Miss Burton has written so often to fix the day for our return, that we must not put it off any longer."

"I expected a supporter in you, Miss Colville," said Sir Thomas, "and you, too, are turned against us. But if you are quite decided, all I can say is that I am very sorry. To tell the truth, I am going with Mr. Michelson this morning, and the carriage is therefore at your service; only I hope you will change your minds."

Anna shook her head, and said she was very sorry, but she must go.

"Then I must wish you good-morning, as I am to meet Michelson at the Lodge; I must not say good-bye, but *au revoir*." And Sir Thomas left the breakfast-room, to go, like all the rest of our male friends and acquaintances, to vote for Michelson.

No, not all. We must make one exception, and travel to one more breakfast-table to make it. We must go back some two or three hours, since a Fairfield breakfast is punctually at eight o'clock, and Jessie is always ready, and the tea made, a quarter of an hour earlier.

Uncle James has ridden over at dawn, to talk about the election; and he, Pynsent, Charles, and Tiny are assembled. They have always to wait

some minutes for Aunt Betsey, who cannot bring herself to be quite punctual, particularly in the winter.

"Why, Pynsent, I never knew you so stubborn," said Uncle James, holding his knife and fork rather inelegantly on end, and letting a thin slice of ham dangle on the prongs of the latter. "What objection can a youth like you have to vote with your uncle? Besides, Mr. Michelson has been so kind to you."

"That is the worst part of it," replied Pynsent; "I wish all his bottles of wine and baskets of fruit were with Pharaoh and all his host. Once for all, Uncle, I cannot vote for Mr. Michelson. I don't like him or his politics; and I am not going to sell my birthright, like Esau, for a mess of pottage."

"What does the boy mean? How these young chaps do get on!" muttered Uncle James. "Good morning, Ma'am," he added, in a flurried manner, as Aunt Betsey made her appearance; "I am trying to persuade our nephew Pynsent to vote for Mr. Michelson, and he begins to talk about a mess of pottage."

"Well, Uncle, my birthright as an Englishman is liberty to vote according to my conscience; and the mess of pottage is the wine and fruit. I think it a very apt simile."

"But your father was a Tory, boy; and you are a Tory, Ma'am, if I don't mistake?"

"Decidedly," said Aunt Betsey; "but Pynsent is quite unlike the rest of us."

"My father was not a Tory of the Michelson school, a milk-and-water, half-and-half mixture, but a downright glass of original strong spirits," said Pynsent; "and if Mr. Michelson were like him, I might almost be brought to vote for him: but as it is, I beg to decline. He doesn't know what he is himself yet, and nobody else can guess. He is an old fop and dandy, and cares for no one but himself."

"He is very kind," whispered Tiny, "and says he will help Charley."

"Indeed! We are much obliged to him. I am thankful to say we can help ourselves. But you are a good little girl to take his part."

"Come, Jessie," said Uncle James, "see what you can do with Pynsent."

"Don't ask me, Uncle," said Jessie; "I could not wish him to do anything against his conscience. I am no politician myself; but I confess I like to see a man one thing or another. I would rather have Captain Burford's red-hot Toryism than Mr. Michelson's 'all things to all men.'"

"Miss Betsey, won't you say something?" said Uncle James.

"Pynsent has long ceased to think anything of my advice," replied Aunt Betsey.

"The long and short of the matter is," said Pynsent, swallowing hastily his last mouthful of bread-and-butter, "I have no time to vote at all. Do you not know that I am a professional man, and every hour of my day is cut out? I dare say I shall find my surgery full against I get there. Let me see, I have one old woman with sore eyes; an old man with inflammation of the windpipe; a boatman's child in the croup. And as to my aristocratic patients,—why, they are really unmentionable."

"You always make a joke of everything," said Jessie, laughing.

"A very comfortable characteristic," replied Pynsent; "one must be jocular to make a bit of fun out of the obstinate fools I have to deal with. That same old man, for instance, my first patient, I told him to put a mustard plaister, or some turpentine, to his throat; and when I came back, he had not done it, and his throat was really in an alarming state. I asked the reason. 'He wasn't agoing to burn himself to death with them hot nostrums. He never heard of such a thing all his days; and wasn't agoing to begin now. He knowed what a blister was, very well, and what leeches

was; but he'd be dashed if he'd be cooked with mustard and turpentine.'"

"Haw! haw! haw!" roared Uncle James till the oaken ceiling rang, "you're a fine fellow, Pynsent, but the old 'un had his peculiarities. I vow I shouldn't like the application either."

"But I had it done, Uncle, *nolens volens*: and now I am off to repeat the dose if the throat is not better."

"But the election?" began Uncle James once more: "will you come with me, and vote for us?"

"Have you any conscience?" asked Pynsent. "Will you come with me, and vote for the opposite party? Mr. Michelson is not my landlord."

"Do you mean to say, Sir, that I am influenced by being a tenant of Mr. Michelson?" said Uncle James, getting red.

"I do not think you would vote for him if you were not his tenant," replied Pynsent somewhat bluffly.

Jessie saw that a storm was rising, and hastened to lull it.

"There is nothing to be made of Pynsent, Uncle, when he takes a thing into his head; so the best way is to let him alone. Pynsent, you had much better go to your old man, or he may be burnt to

death by this time. I hope you told him when to take off his plaister; or depend upon it he has got it on still. I once applied one, and my patient resolutely kept it on for nearly three hours."

"What was the result?" asked Pynsent, getting interested.

"Why his wife came to entreat me to let Tom take off that dreadful mustard: he was in such a state there was no living with him: she thought he was going mad. I got into a fright, and returned with her: and certainly Tom was almost out of his mind. Imagine his state when the plaister was removed: he tore about the room, raving at me and the plaister by turns. But he was thoroughly cured, and the threatened inflammation of the chest departed."

"Dear me!" said Pynsent, "could any one be so ignorant? Good morning, Uncle; I must see after my mustard."

"I think you want a little cress with it," growled Uncle James; "you're the most obstinate, impudent dog I ever saw. Jessie, will you order my horse? I must go without him, I suppose."

Uncle James departed in a bad temper, and the rest of the family set about their usual avocations until two o'clock, when, to their surprise, Anna and Louisa arrived. Scarcely had a few questions

been put and answered, when Anna beckoned Jessie upstairs; and, going into the bedroom of the latter, bolted the door, and throwing her arms round her sister, burst into tears.

Jessie was alarmed; but it was some time before she could obtain an explanation of Anna's emotion. At last she elicited the history of Mr. Michelson's proposal, and of Chatham's attentions and intended visit; together with a partial confession of Anna's attachment for Chatham, which she was led to suppose, from her manner rather than her words, to be, unfortunately, as strong as all her attachments were.

Jessie's keen common sense perceived at once that no good could arise out of such an unfortunate combination of circumstances. She tried to stem Anna's indignation against the father, and to point out the madness of encouraging the admiration of the son, but in vain. She considered herself insulted by the proposal of the one, and honoured by what she foresaw would be that of the other. Jessie set to work to manage the private interview which was evidently pending. Aunt Betsey was the difficulty. She asked Louisa Colville to propose a walk. She did so, and the proposal being accepted, she and Aunt Betsey set forth and took Tiny with them. Jessie then told Charles, in few

words, the state of the case, and he betook himself to his own room to meditate upon it. As soon as Anna was sufficiently composed, the sisters went together to the parlour, and there awaited the arrival of Captain Michelson. Jessie did her best to impress upon Anna's mind the propriety and necessity of some degree of caution and reserve with one of whom she knew so little; and she entreated her not to rush into an engagement with him, supposing he should wish it, under the present circumstances. On the other hand she endeavoured to brace her mind against the possibility of his being, like so many of whom she had heard and read—his father, for example—merely an admirer of good looks, and not one who wished to marry.

Anna always listened to her sister with the docility of a child. She was the only one who could influence her. Wilful and almost imperious with others, with her she was still in leading-strings—the strong leading-strings of affection. She looked upon Jessie as wholly superior to every one else in the world, in all, excepting mere beauty and accomplishments; and not even the strict propriety of Miss Primmerton's, or the careless gaiety and ease of Sir Thomas Mansford's, had succeeded in shaking her faith in her.

Chatham arrived, and as most of my readers have doubtless felt the sensation that the knock at the door of an anxiously-expected guest sometimes occasions through the whole frame, beginning at the heart and vibrating every nerve, I need not describe how Anna trembled, and turned from pale to red; and how even Jessie got up and sat down twice before he came into the room.

No one would have supposed, from Chatham's appearance, that he had come to make a declaration of love. His handsome and usually joyous face was clouded and melancholy. He scarcely knew how to begin any kind of conversation; and when Jessie spoke of the ball, and made an effort to break through the restraint they were all feeling, he scarcely cared to reply.

After what she considered a proper space for propriety, Jessie left the room. She tried to busy herself about various household duties: she could not perform them. Her heart was with the darling sister committed to her care by her mother on her death-bed: her, for whom she would gladly have sacrificed her own happiness, but who, she foresaw, would have much to suffer in this life. She went to her own room, and there she sought to tranquillize her mind, and to think over what would be the right course to pursue, under the differ-

ent aspects that matters might wear. As was her custom in all hours of difficulty, she committed herself to her Heavenly Father for direction and counsel, feeling assured that He would guide, as he had hitherto done, His erring, orphan children aright, and make all things work together for their good.

END OF VOLUME I.

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